



General Repertory Club

28

MY WIFE'S FAMILY

26

18
A Farcical Comedy

FRED DUPREZ

From the story by Hal Stephens
and Harry B. Linton

PROPERTY OF THEATRE INC
Please return to
Librarian after use

French's
Acting
Edition

MY WIFE'S FAMILY

A Farcical Comedy in Three Acts

Written and Devised

by

FRED DUPREZ

From the original story by Hal Stephens
and Harry B. Linton



LONDON
SAMUEL FRENCH LIMITED

SAMUEL FRENCH LTD
26 SOUTHAMPTON STREET, STRAND, LONDON
SAMUEL FRENCH INC
25 WEST 45TH STREET, NEW YORK
7623 SUNSET BOULEVARD, HOLLYWOOD
SAMUEL FRENCH (CANADA) LTD
27 GRENVILLE STREET, TORONTO
SAMUEL FRENCH (AUSTRALIA) PTY LTD
ELIZABETHAN THEATRE TRUST BUILDING
153 DOWLING STREET, SYDNEY

COPYRIGHT, 1950, BY SAMUEL FRENCH, LTD
All Rights Reserved

The copying by manuscript, typescript, photography,
or any other means of reproduction of this play either
in whole or in part is an infringement of the copyright.

MADE AND PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY
LATIMER, TREND AND CO. LTD, PLYMOUTH
MADE IN ENGLAND

Li

CHARACTERS

(in the order of their appearance)

- 22 SALLY NAGG, my Wife's Sister-in-Law
22 WILLIE NAGG, my Wife's Brother
30 STELLA GAY, my Wife
50 ARABELLA NAGG, my Wife's Mother
16 IMA NAGG, my Wife's Sister
6955 NOAH NAGG, my Wife's Father
40 JACK GAY, my Wife's Husband
60 "DOC" KNOTT, a Veterinary Surgeon
4 DOLLY WHITE, an Actress
A CONSTABLE
SERGEANT TRACKEM, a Detective
AN AMBULANCE DRIVER

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

- ACT I. The Library, Jack Gay's, Summer Home. *Morning.*
ACT II. The Lawn, Jack Gay's Summer Home. *Afternoon.*
ACT III. The same as Act I. *Evening.*

DESCRIPTION OF CHARACTERS

JACK GAY. Typical man about town, about forty years of age. He is well dressed and suggests being comfortably well off.

"DOC" KNOTT. Red-nosed, bibulous old ne'er-do-well, bald-headed and dressed rather shabbily, check trousers and Prince Albert. Man of about sixty, on the stout side. A lovable old boozier.

NOAH NAGG. Small, pale-faced, thoroughly henpecked individual, dressed funereally. Typical henpeck.

WILLIE NAGG. Early twenties, well set up.

SERGEANT TRACKEM. Typical detective, dark suit, bowler hat. A would-be wise guy, but really an awful dumb-bell.

ARABELLA NAGG. Woman of about fifty of very stern demeanour. Very massively proportioned in direct contrast to her weak-looking husband **NOAH**.

SALLY NAGG. Ingenué type.

IMA NAGG. About sixteen or seventeen years of age; stage struck.

DOLLY WHITE. Good-looking woman of imposing appearance, and suggesting an old "has been" type of actress who, no longer suitable for the stage, has opened up a Dramatic Academy. Woman of at least forty, showing traces of former good looks, and well peroxidized.

STELLA GAY. Straight lead. A woman of about thirty years of age.

All applications for a licence to perform this play, both by amateur and professional companies, must be made to—

MESSRS SAMUEL FRENCH, LTD,
26 SOUTHAMPTON STREET,
STRAND, LONDON, W.C.2,

or their authorized agents.

The fee for each and every performance by amateur companies is Five Guineas, and upon payment of the fee a licence will be issued.

No performance may be given unless this licence has been obtained.

In the event of further performances being given, the fee for each and every representation subsequent to the first is Four Guineas. This reduction applies only in the case of the performances being *consecutive* and at the *same theatre or hall*.

The following particulars are needed for the issue of a licence:

Title of the play or plays.
Name of the town.
Name of the theatre or hall.
Date of the performance or performances.
Name and address of applicant.
Name of the Society.
Amount remitted.

The fee for performance by professional companies will be quoted upon application.

Character costumes and wigs used in the performance of plays contained in French's Acting Edition may be obtained from Messrs CHARLES H. FOX, LTD, 184 High Holborn, London, W.C.2.

MY WIFE'S FAMILY

ACT I

SCENE.—*The Library of JACK GAY's house in the country. Morning.*

It is a comfortably furnished room. There is a wide door at the back C., leading to the hall in which the staircase can be seen. A french window up stage in the R. wall leads to the garden. There are doors at R. and L., somewhat down stage. At R.C. a settee with a small table above it. At L.C., a small table on which are a whisky decanter, two glasses, a syphon of soda, telephone, cigarette-box, and matches. A chair R. of the table. A small easy chair down L. At the back, R., a desk and writing chair. L. of the C. door is a bookcase. An aneroid barometer hangs on the back wall between the bookcase and the door. Above the L. door is a light switch, and below this door is a bell press. Other small furniture as desired to dress the stage. The fireplace, if shown, should be at R.

(See the Ground Plan at the end of the Play.)

The CURTAIN rises to music—the first eight bars of “Yes, Sir, That’s My Baby”. WILLIE and SALLY are discovered at C. They are embracing. WILLIE is a light-hearted, well set up young man of twenty-two. SALLY is very charming, about the same age, and dressed in an attractive parlour-maid’s uniform.

WILLIE. Darling!

SALLY (*very fondly*). Willie.

WILLIE. Oh, Sally, I’m sick and tired of all this, all this secrecy and fear of being found out, and you having to play servant to your own sister-in-law. Here we’ve been married just over a year and afraid to tell anyone about it. And then there’s the baby. Why, he’ll grow up without knowing his father or mother.

SALLY. But, darling, we see him at least once a week.

WILLIE. I know, and it’s sweet of your Cousin Tillie to take care of him so well. But suppose she should suddenly decide to leave for the North as she’s thought of doing? What then?

SALLY. There, there! Don’t worry about it, dear. We’ll find a way out, I’m sure.

WILLIE (*breaking to down L.C.*). Well, I’ll tell you one thing, if I stand up to Battling Bonzo tonight and win that two hundred pounds, we’ll declare ourselves and leave her for good—baby and all.

SALLY (*moving down to WILLIE*). Oh, Willie, I meant to tell you before. There is a man in the garden with Mr Gay, and I am sure I have seen him somewhere before. It was at the register office.

WILLIE. What are you talking about?

SALLY. Don't you remember the man who was called in as witness when we were married? You said he was drunk.

WILLIE. Oh yes, that horse doctor fellow. Of course, I remember he signed the marriage register. You say he is here?

SALLY. Yes, dear, with Mr Gay.

WILLIE. Great Scott! I hope he does not come in and recognize either of us. Anyway, keep out of his way if possible, and I will do the same. Well, I'm off now, dear. I will see you later. (*He kisses her again.*)

(STELLA enters L., dressed in walking costume. She sees them embracing.)

STELLA (*sharply*). Willie, what are you doing?

(SALLY, confused, works her way up stage to the door C.)

WILLIE (*embarrassed*). Oh, nothing, nothing at all. Just keeping the staff in a good humour. (*He crosses to the table L. and lights a cigarette.*)

STELLA. I wish you would find a more dignified way of doing it. Sally, get on with your work. You must have everything spic and span for my dear mother's arrival. (*Crossing to above the settee.*) She is so particular and this is the first time she's seen us in our new home.

(SALLY exits C. to off L.)

Willie, I thought you were going to the station to meet Mother?

WILLIE. I would have, sister darling, but I thought Jack was going. Besides, I had to do my exercises for tonight's fight.

STELLA. Are those your exercises, flirting with Sally?

WILLIE. I wasn't flirting with Sally.

STELLA (*arranging flowers behind the settee*). Oh yes, you were. I must say it's disgraceful, and it isn't the first time I have noticed it. You must stop it, it isn't done.

WILLIE. But I've just done it.

STELLA. I know you've just done it, but it isn't nice.

WILLIE. Oh yes, it is.

STELLA. Oh, I will be so glad to see Mamma and Ima again. And, of course, our dear father. Poor old Father! I wonder if Mother abuses him as much as ever?

WILLIE. I shouldn't be at all surprised.

ARABELLA (*off stage C.*). Don't tell me, you brazen hussy!

STELLA. Listen!

ARABELLA. I came all the way from the station alone and if my daughter is in this house, I can find her.

WILLIE } (together). { It's Mother!
STELLA }

(SALLY enters C., carrying a suitcase, followed by ARABELLA. SALLY stands R. of the door. ARABELLA goes effusively down to STELLA R.C.)

STELLA (up to R.C.). Mother, dear! (She embraces her.)

ARABELLA. My darling!

WILLIE (by the table). Hello, Mother!

ARABELLA (turning). Willie! My noble Willie! You may kiss me. (She goes to WILLIE and kisses him.)

(SALLY exits upstairs. Enter IMA L., boisterously.)

IMA (to STELLA R.C.). Hello, Sis! (She kisses her.) My, but I'm glad to see you again.

STELLA. And I'm glad to see you, dear.

IMA (moving down R. to the settee; to WILLIE). Hello there! How's the big boy, the big he-man from the wide open spaces?

WILLIE (crossing to her). I'm fine. Never better. Landed in the movies yet?

IMA. No, but I will. I'm taking elocution lessons now. Want to hear me?

(They both sit on the settee—IMA R., WILLIE L.)

WILLIE. No thanks!

ARABELLA. Oh, my children, I've lost your father! (As she moves to the door up C.) Where are you, sweetheart?

NOAH (off). Here I am, my angel.

ARABELLA. Where, my darling?

(NOAH enters up C., carrying a suitcase upon which are loaded parcels and a hat-box. He carries a travelling rug over his arm, and is loaded to the limit.)

NOAH. Here, my love.

STELLA (R.C.). Hello, Father.

NOAH (moving down C.). Hello, Stella.

WILLIE. Hello, Pop.

NOAH. Hello, Willie. (He goes L.C. and sits on the chair R. of the table wearily, gazing into space. He drops one of the parcels.)

ARABELLA (moving down C.). Noah, will you be careful of those things.

NOAH. Accidents will happen, love.

ARABELLA. The greatest accident that ever happened to me, was when we got married.

NOAH. Yes, dear, I was slightly bruised myself. (He sighs to himself.)

ARABELLA (to STELLA). Well, my dear, I don't see anything of that priceless son-in-law of mine. He might have met us at the

station instead of leaving us to the mercy of a horrible-looking taxi-driver.

STELLA. Didn't Jack meet you at the train?

ARABELLA. He did not, and I don't suppose he ever intended to, either.

STELLA. I'm sure he went to meet you and must have missed you somehow. But come, let me show you to your rooms. You, Ima, are to have the Blue Room. And you, Mother, have the Rose Room.

NOAH. I suppose I am to have the bathroom.

ARABELLA. Silence, sir, you will speak when you are spoken to.

NOAH. Thank you.

ARABELLA. The Rose Room. I love roses. They always remind me of your dear departed Uncle George. He loved roses, too. He had such a beautiful one on his nose. It must have cost him a fortune. (*She looks round.*) I must say your new place looks very comfortable. What do you call it?

STELLA. "Peacehaven."

ARABELLA. "Peacehaven." What a soothing name. I'm all for peace!

(NOAH grunts.)

ARABELLA. But tell me, my dear, has your husband bought you a piano yet?

STELLA. No, Mother. But I wish he would—I'd love one.

ARABELLA. I'd *hate* one. Your father made me a gift of a piano last Christmas, but it didn't take me long to get rid of it.

(NOAH sighs.)

Now what's the matter?

NOAH. Nothing, Buttercup.

ARABELLA. What did you call me?

NOAH. Buttercup.

ARABELLA. Oh! I thought you said Gutterpup. But come along, Noah, bring up those parcels. (*She starts for the stairs up c.*)

NOAH. I will if I can.

ARABELLA. If you can, sir?

NOAH (*rising*). Well, I will whether I can or not.

(STELLA and ARABELLA go upstairs, followed by NOAH.)

WILLIE (*rising*). Can I help you, Father?

NOAH. No, my boy, there is no help for me.

(*He exits c. after the others. IMA rises and crosses to the table L.C.*)

WILLIE. Poor old Father! Still as henpecked as ever. (*Moving to c.*) For goodness' sake what did Mother want to bring him along for, anyway?

IMA. Oh, Pop's all right. He's really quite a good sport when he

gets the chance to be. And he's awfully good to me, too. In fact, he's promised me all the money I want for my dramatic lessons.

WILLIE. Dramatic lessons?

IMA. Why, yes—I've decided that my future lies on the stage. Well, not the stage exactly, but on the films. I've made up my mind to get into pictures and nothing shall stop me.

WILLIE (*moving back to the settee*). Well, I wish you luck. I wonder if old Dad would be good for a touch from me? I need some money awfully badly. (*He sits on the L. arm of the settee.*)

IMA. What for? (*She sits against the R. edge of the table.*)

WILLIE. Oh, it doesn't matter. If I told you, you would be surprised. But I can't tell you—at least not yet. It's a secret.

IMA. Well, I know old Pop is pretty soft, but I don't suppose he's soft enough to part with money without a good reason.

WILLIE. Oh well, perhaps I shan't have to touch the old geezer. If I win that fight tonight I'll *get* some money.

IMA. What fight?

WILLIE (*surprised*). Haven't you heard? Why, the managers for Battling Bonzo agree to pay two hundred pounds to any amateur who can stand up to their man for six rounds. And I'm going after it. I wasn't the champion of our school for nothing.

IMA. I hope so, William. And when is this fight to take place?

WILLIE. Tonight at half-past nine. Want to watch me train?

IMA. No, thanks. (*She stands.*) I'm going upstairs to unpack and then practise my elocution. (*Moving to R.C., taking a letter from her bag.*) Look at this letter, it's from a director of one of our best film companies. They are giving me an audition tomorrow.

WILLIE (*taking the letter and reading it*). By Jove, this sounds interesting. What are you giving them? Something from Shakespeare?

IMA. Oh, I suppose so. Anyway, I have got to be letter perfect. (*Crossing up c.*) I'll see you later. (*Turning at the door.*) Oh, Willie, wouldn't it be lovely if you win your fight, and I get on the talkies. We'll both be stars.

WILLIE. I shall probably *see* stars!

(*Postman's knock off L.*)

Ah, the postman. (*He moves up.*)

IMA. If there's anything for me, bring it up.

(*She exits upstairs.*)

WILLIE. All right, Sis.

(*He exits up c. to L.*)

GAY (*off*). Hello, Willie. Folks arrived yet?

WILLIE (*off*). Yes, all here.

(*JACK GAY enters c. from L. followed by "DOC" KNOTT, who puts his hat on the table L.C.*)

GAY (*at the door; calling after WILLIE*). You'll find a few letters in the hall for you. (*He goes down towards the settee and throws a few letters on the table behind the settee. He keeps one in his hand which he vainly tries to read during the scene with "Doc".*) Now, listen, Doc, it's no use you following me around like this. I refuse to buy a lawn-mower and that settles that. All I asked you to do was to tell me what was the matter with my horse. You've done that, so our business is at an end. Now—good morning and don't slam the door. (*He sits on the settee.*)

Doc (c.). No, I won't. But I'm sorry you don't want a lawn-mower. You see, Mr Gay, things have not been quite so good with me, especially in the last few years. When we left college together we both started our careers with even chances, but you forged ahead and are now able to rest on your laurels. I worked pretty hard, too, but I just didn't seem to make the grade. Just drifted from one thing to another without really landing anywhere. Things have been particularly hard lately, and the soles of my shoes are so thin that if I were to stand on half a crown I could tell whether it is heads or tails! Is there anything else I could sell you? Life insurance, for instance?

GAY. No, thank you. I've got more life insurance now than I can afford. I'm worth more dead than I am alive. But seriously, Doc, I think you would have been all right if you had stuck to your profession as a veterinary.

Doc (*breaking to L.C.*). I did try to remain a veterinary. But what is there to vet in these days? (*Turning.*) Why, there aren't three horses in the town. So I practically gave up vetting and became a piano tuner. (*Crossing towards GAY.*) By the way, can I tune your piano?

GAY. I'm sorry, I have no piano.

Doc. What? No piano?

GAY. No, no piano.

Doc. But surely you play?

GAY. Oh yes, I play, but I have no piano to play on.

Doc. Do you play *Faust*?

GAY. I play *Faust*—or *slow*. Now listen, if I ever get a piano, I promise you can come in and tune it. And now get out, I'm busy. (*He tries to read his letter.*)

Doc. Thank you, good morning. (*He starts towards up c. and pauses.*) Oh, by the way, I notice you have a chicken run.

GAY. Yes, I have a few chickens laying around. What about it?

Doc. Now I'm selling a patent reversible hen-nest. (*Moving down a little.*) It's an ordinary hen-nest, but every time the hen lays an egg, the nest reverses and the egg disappears. The hen turns, and not seeing the egg, concludes she has *not* laid one, so she sits right down and lays another.

GAY. Oh, you are selling that, are you?

Doc. I am.

GAY. Well, I am going to give up chickens and start raising ducks. Now, you can get right out of here, or I'll whistle for the dog.

Doc (*pulling a whistle from his pocket and blowing it*). Splendid! I'll sell you a whistle.

GAY. I don't want a whistle. Get out, or I'll have you shot.

Doc (*reaching for his hip pocket*). I'll sell you a gun.

GAY (*exasperated*). Say, if you don't beat it, I'll throw you out.

Doc (*airily*). Oh, very well. Suppose I can take a hint. See you later. (*He crosses R. to the french window.*)

GAY. All right, Doc, see you at the *Green Swan*. They open at eleven.

Doc. I'll be there at ten-fifty-five.

(*He exits through the french window, just as NOAH is seen up C., coming downstairs.*)

NOAH (*entering*). Ah, Jack, my boy. There you are!

GAY (*rising to greet him*). Hello, Father-in-law. (*They shake hands.*) Well, well, well, I am glad to see you again. I must say you are looking fit and well, strong and massive. How are you, anyway?

NOAH. Quite well, my boy, quite well.

GAY. That's fine. I must apologize for not coming down to the station to meet you, but, to tell you the truth, I forgot all about it. I hope you forgive me.

NOAH. That's quite all right, my boy, I understand. (*He crosses down R.C. to the settee.*) But I must say my wife was a bit perturbed over your non-appearance. She takes offence so easily, you know.

GAY (*L. of the settee*). Yes, I know. How is the old blister? Still as narkey as ever?

NOAH. Worse!

GAY. Worse, eh! I'm sorry to hear that. I'll give her "worse" if she starts any of her shenanigans around here. (*He crosses L.C. to the table.*) Now what about a little drink to celebrate the occasion—eh? A little Bacchanalian revelry—something to anoint the tonsils?

NOAH (*easing to L. of the settee and looking around apprehensively*). Well, er—yes—that is if you think we'll be unobserved.

GAY. Great guns, you're not afraid of your wife, are you?

NOAH (*bravely*). Afraid of my wife? Oh, dear no. Oh, dear no, no, no!

GAY. That's the spirit. And so is this. (*He indicates the whisky decanter.*) Say "when".

NOAH. Not more than full.

GAY (*as he pours whisky into two glasses and fills them both with soda*). Do you know, Pop, I marvel at the way you put up with your wife's nonsense. Why do you let her get away with all that rough stuff? Why don't you put your foot down for a change and show

her who is the real boss in the house? Why don't you rise in the might of your manly majesty and give her a good crack across the chops? It would do her good.

NOAH (*aghast*). *Me give her a crack across the chops! My God, she'd kill me!*

GAY (*crossing R. and handing NOAH a glass*). I shouldn't be at all surprised. Well, you're safe while you're in my house. (*Easing to c.*) Anyway, I hope so. Well, here's to you. Drink hearty. Very good stuff this—Elephant whisky.

NOAH. Elephant whisky?

GAY. Yes, two drinks and you throw your trunk out of the window.

(*They both laugh and drink.*)

NOAH (*breaking to the settee*). And now, my boy, I want to tell you something confidentially. (*He sits.*)

GAY (*sitting R. of the table L.C.*). Speak freely.

NOAH. It's about Arabella.

GAY. Why spoil my day?

NOAH. Some weeks ago, as you are doubtless aware, we celebrated the anniversary of our wedding.

GAY. Why celebrate a calamity like that?

NOAH. I wonder. Anyway, to mark the occasion, I made her the gift of a piano. (*He drinks.*)

GAY. A most generous gift indeed.

NOAH. Yes, I thought so at the time. But it never occurred to me that if there is one thing in the world she hates more than another, it is a pianó.

GAY. Oh? Thanks for the tip. I'll have one moved in here at once.

NOAH. Now that is just the point I'm coming to. (*He drinks.*) I had the piano delivered one afternoon when I knew she'd be out. When she arrived home and saw it—well, you never heard such carryings on in your life. "Who placed that piano there?" she cried. "How did it get here?" "I bought it for you as a gift," I replied. "As a little token of my love." "Is that so," she responded, "then you can have your token taken right out of here within the next half-hour, or I'll smash it to bits." With that she actually struck at the keyboard so violently with her umbrella that she not only broke her umbrella, but three or four of the keys as well, and I distinctly heard one or two of the strings snap—(*he snaps his fingers*)—like that, only louder. Then she ordered me to take it out of the house. (*He finishes his whisky.*)

GAY. Well, this is really most amazing. And what causes this hatred of such a noble instrument, I wonder? Was her mother ever frightened by one?

NOAH. I haven't the least idea. All I know is that she detests them. And now, this is what I'm getting at. Knowing that you

have no piano, I took the liberty of having ours hauled down here on a lorry.

GAY (*rising*). You've done what! (*Crossing to c.*) Had your piano hauled down here to me? Well, I never! And what's the big idea? What's this going to cost me?

NOAH (*rising*). Nothing, my boy. (*Crossing to GAY.*) I want you to accept it as a little token of goodwill from me.

GAY. Really? Well, well, that is nice of you! (*Taking NOAH's glass to the table.*) Now I appreciate that, I do for a fact. Thank you, Father-in-law. (*Returning to c.*) Do you know, I had intended giving Stella a piano for her birthday in about a month's time. Now she shall have one sooner. It will please *her*, and it will annoy your wife—and that will please me. Does your Millstone know anything about this?

NOAH. Not a word.

GAY (*laughing*). By gosh, that's a hot one. She *will* be pleased when she sees her hated piano turning up here! The piano is on its way, you say?

NOAH. It should arrive here at any moment. Now, all it requires are a few minor repairs, and retuning, and it's as good as new.

GAY. Splendid! (*He looks around to see that they are not overheard.*) Now, I'll tell you what. We have got to do a bit of conniving—a bit of conspiring. Listen! In the first place, I don't want Stella to know a thing about this until later. Now, you go outside and watch for the lorry. The minute it arrives, have the piano smuggled into the summer house in the garden. I'll have it repaired out there and then moved into the drawing-room. Let me know the minute it gets here. If you can't get to me personally without arousing suspicion, send me a note or some sign by Sally. But don't forget, *mum* is the word. (*He finishes his whisky and takes his glass to the table.*)

NOAH (*very slightly intoxicated*). Mum is the word, my dear boy. Mum *is* the word! Leave everything to me. I'll go outside and wait for that lorry to arrive and when it *does* arrive, I'll summer it into the smuggle house. The piano, I mean, not the lorry. (*He goes up c. to the door.*)

GAY. That's the stuff.

(*He sees IMA coming down the stairs.*)

(*Very mysteriously.*) Ssh!

(*IMA enters c. She carries a small book.*)

IMA. Hello, Pop.

NOAH. Oh, hello, Ima.

(*He exits c., to L.*)

GAY. Hello, Ima, my dear.

IMA. Hello, Jack! (*They meet at c.*)

GAY. Well, I am glad to see you again. Welcome to my new house. As charming as ever, by Jove! What are you reading?

IMA. Oh, I'm just studying a passage from Shakespeare.

GAY. Studying in the passage with Shakespeare? You naughty little minx. Never trust a man with whiskers.

IMA. Did Shakespeare have whiskers?

GAY. Of course, he did. His wife made his neckties. And now, my dear, if you'll excuse me for a little while, I have a few odds and ends to attend to. Just make yourself at home. I'll be back as soon as I can and we'll have a nice long chat. *(He goes towards the door up L. and turns.)* How are you, anyway?

IMA. I'm fine, thanks.

GAY. That's good! And how is your mother?

IMA. She's not so well.

GAY. That's *better!*

IMA. She's been very morbid lately, always talking about dying, and says she wants to be cremated.

GAY. Splendid! Tell her to get her hat on, and I'll take her along.

(He exits L.)

IMA *(moving down below the settee, reciting from her book)*. "I could to thee a tale unfold whose lightest word would freeze thy young blood, part thy matted and combined locks and make each particular hair stand on end like quills upon the fretful porcupine. Oh, list, list, Hamlet."

(DOC KNOTT has entered during the above speech through the french window as far as C. He gazes at IMA in astonishment, then slowly tips to the table where he has left his hat. At the end of the speech, IMA turns, and seeing him, utters a light scream.)

DOC. Excuse me, young lady, I've just come back for my hat. *(He picks up his hat from the table.)*

IMA. That's quite all right. Are you a guest here?

DOC. Well, yes and no. My name is Knott. They call me Doc Knott.

IMA. How do you do, Doctor Knott. My name is Ima. I'm Mrs Gay's sister. I'm studying for the stage.

DOC. Studying for the stage? Now I am selling a little book entitled *How to Become an Actress* in three parts.

IMA. Really? I should like to have one, but I haven't any money.

DOC. The price of this valuable little volume is five shillings, but if you will throw in a ham sandwich, we'll call it square. But do you really want to go on the stage?

IMA. Well, not the stage, exactly. I want to get on the films, I think they're wonderful.

DOC. I think they're terrible. I used to like the silent drama. I

loved to go to the cinema where I could see a woman open her mouth without having to listen to her. But seriously, if you want to go in for this picture business, I think I can help you.

IMA. Could you, really?

DOC. I'm sure I could. What you want, my child, is tuition—particularly in elocution.

IMA. I know I do, Doctor, and what is more I need it quick. *(She takes the letter from her bag.)* Read this, Doctor. *(Handing Doc the letter.)* You see I have an appointment for an audition tomorrow. Do you think you can help me out right away?

DOC *(giving back the letter)*. Of course I can. Listen. Some years ago I met a very talented actress in very peculiar circumstances. Her name was Dolly White, quite a star. Ever heard of her?

IMA. No.

DOC. No? Ah! the limitations of youth. Anyway, our meeting was brought about in a rather odd way.

IMA. Do tell me about it.

DOC. I will. May I sit down? *(He sits R. of the table without waiting for a reply.)* Thank you. I must tell you that a good many years ago your brother-in-law, Mr Gay, and myself, were students at the same college. Well, one night about ten years ago, we both attended a midnight bathing party, when this girl got into difficulties in the swimming pool and I rescued her. She thanked me and then asked my name. I told her Jack Gay.

IMA. Why did you do that?

DOC. Well, I was engaged at the time, and didn't want my girl to know that I attended midnight bathing parties.

IMA. Oh, I see.

DOC. Well, I got her out of the water, she had fainted, so to get her around again, I slapped her pretty hard until she opened her eyes. My dear child, you have no idea how I slapped that girl. I said, "I hope I have not bruised you too much," and she began to giggle, and closed her eyes again—but I ran away before she could get a good look at me.

IMA. Do you think you could get hold of her? I do so want to have her assistance for my test tomorrow. My whole future depends on it.

DOC *(rising and moving to above the table)*. Mind you, I have not seen her for ten years, but I will ring her up and see what she has to say. *(He picks up the phone, and speaks.)* Exchange, I haven't a directory here. Will you look me up the Bijou Dramatic Academy and put me through. Not through the Academy, through to the Academy. Thank you. . . . *(To IMA.)* My dear, I have every faith in this lady's ability. Mind you, I have not seen her since the little episode ten years ago, but I have heard some wonderful accounts of her activities. I feel sure she will get you through your test all right. *(Into the phone.)* Oh, hello, is that Miss Dolly White? How do you do? It's Jack Gay speaking—

IMA (*interrupting*). But surely——

DOC (*waving IMA aside; into the phone*). Do you remember the midnight bathing party ten years ago, when I saved your life, and gave you a slapping? What? Ah! I thought you would be interested. Well, listen, Miss White, I have a pupil for you, quite a nice little pupil, who wants to take elocution lessons right away as she has a talkie test tomorrow.

IMA (*by the chair R. of the table*). Tell her to come along right away.

DOC (*into the phone*). You would have to begin at once. Can you come along immediately? What's that? You want five pounds. (*To IMA.*) Have you got a fiver on you?

IMA. No, but I think I can get one from Father.

DOC. Ask the old bird for one for me at the same time! (*Into the phone.*) Pop along right away and I will introduce you. The address is "Peacehaven", Forty-six The Avenue. Yes, I'll wait here for you. *Bon Swoir.* (*He rings off, and turns to IMA.*) That's good-bye in German. (*Leading IMA to R.C.*) Now, I will go outside and await your instructress. But before I go just one word of advice. Study very hard and some day you will become as famous as Mary Pickford. (*He crosses to the french window R.*)

IMA. Do you know Mary Pickford?

DOC (*turning*). Do I know Mary Pickford? I knew her father, old Pickford. I knew him when he had only *one* van.

(*He exits into the garden. IMA eases to C., opens her book, and is about to start reciting when GAY enters up L. IMA closes her book, and looks up.*)

GAY (*moving to C.*). I say, Ima, have you seen anything of your dad?

IMA. No, why?

GAY (*slightly confused*). Oh, nothing, I only wondered.

ARABELLA (*off C.*). Come along, Stella.

IMA. Ah, Mother's coming.

(*She rushes off down R.*)

GAY. Yes, Mother's coming and Jack's going. Come on, kid.

(*GAY starts towards the door R. Before he can exit, STELLA followed by ARABELLA enters up C. from the stairs.*)

STELLA. Ah, Jack, there you are!

GAY (*turning, below the R. end of the settee*). Yes, darling, here I am—am, I mean.

STELLA. Here's Mother.

(*ARABELLA moves down R. of the table. She glares at JACK.*)

GAY. Well, well, the old covered wagon! (*He crosses to C.*) Hello,

Mother-in-law. Sit down and take a load off your feet. How are you, anyway? (*To STELLA, aside.*) What's the matter with the old bird?

STELLA (*c.*). Jack, why didn't you meet Mother at the station?

GAY (*privately, to STELLA*). Oh, that's it, is it? (*Addressing them both.*) Well, now, I am awfully sorry about that. I went down to the station and when I got there the silly old train was just pulling in. I thought it was pulling out, so I came back home again. (*He laughs idiotically.*)

ARABELLA (*by the table*). I don't believe a word of it.

GAY. I don't blame you.

ARABELLA. I don't think you wanted to meet me at all. Oh, I know that I am unwelcome. I know that you hate me. I know you hate my family because we are so refined. You get angry and fly into a rage just because we've come to visit you for a few short months.

GAY. Why? I haven't said a word.

ARABELLA. It's not what a man says, it's what he thinks. Even now you are thinking up something disagreeable to say to me.

GAY (*aside to STELLA*). She's right.

ARABELLA. I have come on a visit to my daughter because I feel that she needs me to advise her and to guide her. And I want my visit to be a peaceful and a quiet one. There shall be harmony, sweet harmony, and if there isn't I'm going to find out the reason why. (*She crosses R. to below the settee.*)

GAY (*breaking down L.*). Why, my dear Mother-in-law, harmony is what we specialize in around here. (*Turning.*) Why, our married life is just one song after another, isn't it, darling?

(*He sings "La Donna è Mobile".* ARABELLA snorts. SALLY enters up C. with a note written on blue paper. She hesitates about coming down.)

GAY (*moving up c.*). What is it, Sally?

SALLY (*to GAY*). A note for you, sir.

(STELLA eases to L.C.)

GAY (*taking the note*). Thank you, Sally. Take a day off. Take two days off.

(SALLY exits up C.)

ARABELLA. So you receive notes?

GAY (*looking disgusted*). Yes, I receive notes. I receive a lot of notes. It's the notes that make the harmony. Ha! Ha! that is damn good. (*He turns to STELLA.*) Isn't that good, darling? Made that up right out of my head. (*To ARABELLA.*) That's a joke. Notes make harmony. (*He turns to STELLA again.*) Don't you think that's good, sweetheart? Look at Mother, she is laughing herself sick about it. I don't suppose she can see a joke without an appointment. (*To ARABELLA.*) Have I your permission to peruse

contents of same? "Oh, yes," replied the Duchess, as she waved her wooden leg. (*He crosses down L. and reads the note.*) "Piano arrived in summer house, Noah." Well, now for the fireworks. (*He plays an imaginary piano and hums the tune of "Way down upon the Swanee River."*)

ARABELLA. What's the matter with the man? Is he mad? What are you doing?

GAY. I'm just composing a piece of music—a little song which I am dedicating to you.

ARABELLA. Oh! To me? What is it called?

GAY. It's called—"I can give you anything you want but love!"

STELLA (*above the chair R. of the table*). What's the matter, Jack? What's the note about, Jack?

GAY (*slightly confused*). Er—why—nothing, dear. Just a note, that's all. Little business I have to attend to. I am forming a company. Yes, that is what I'm doing, forming a company for straightening out crooked bananas without the use of chloroform. (*Easing up L. of the table.*) Now don't you worry your little head about this. I'll see to this little matter and in the meanwhile you see that Mother is comfortable. (*Crossing above STELLA, to C.*) Make her happy. Give her a red-hot poker to play with. Show her our new home—show her the house—show her the garden—show her the door— (*To ARABELLA.*) Er, do you like flowers, Mother?

ARABELLA (*snaps at him*). No!

GAY. Well, that's too bad. I'd love to place a lily on your chest! We have some lovely flowers. We have some gorgeous pansies. We have long pansies and short pant-sies. Next spring we're expecting some early bloomers.

ARABELLA. Sir, you are no gentleman.

GAY. Oh yes, I am, and have been for years. Anyway, we won't argue the point now. (*To STELLA.*) Well, I'll be off now, dear. I'll be back as soon as I can. (*He crosses to the french window and turns to ARABELLA.*) Well, so long, little sunshine. Who the hell makes your clothes—Vickers Armstrong? or the Bell Tent Company?

(*He exits through the french window.*)

ARABELLA (*moving c.*). Well, I never! Such conduct is highly suspicious. Forming a company is he? I'd like to know what sort of a company he is forming.

STELLA (*slightly worried*). He's not a bit himself. I wonder what can be the matter?

ARABELLA. Matter, you poor innocent child? Can't you see? He receives a note and is afraid to tell us what it contains. Did you notice how guilty he looked? Like a criminal. And the way he skipped out of the house like a flirt, with his insulting remarks about my clothes. (*She dashes furiously to the french window, shouting*

after GAY.) I'll show you who makes my clothes! (*She crosses back to C.*)

STELLA. I'm sure it must be on business! (*Moving to ARABELLA.*)

ARABELLA. Business? Yes, business of meeting some woman.

STELLA (*horrified*). A woman? Why, Mother, what can you be thinking of? Such a thing would never enter his head. (*She breaks to the table L.C. and turns.*)

ARABELLA (*easing towards STELLA*). Oh, my child, I have no desire to frighten you, but a mother's eyes are not to be deceived. Take my advice and be on your guard.

STELLA. Oh, come, Mother, you judge him too harshly. Why, Jack is sincerity itself. We should never accuse people unless we are sure. (*She crosses to the settee.*)

ARABELLA (*moving to R.C.*). My dear, I can plainly see that things are not as they should be. It is well that I came just when I did. Your husband has a secret! He is deceiving you! Oh, if you had only married a man like your father. *He* never flirts. Come, let us go. It is high time that you had me with you.

(*STELLA crosses up C. ARABELLA follows.*)

I mean to find out who that note was from.

(*They exit C. to R. GAY enters, followed by DOC, through the french window. GAY crosses to the table L.*)

GAY. For goodness' sake, Doc, stop following me about. I've got enough trouble as it is. And if I haven't got it now, it's coming. I can see it sticking out a mile.

DOC (*moving to C.; uneasily*). You haven't seen a strange woman anywhere about here?

GAY. The strangest woman I've seen is my mother-in-law. Can you suggest some way to get rid of her?

DOC. What about inventing a painless poison?

GAY. Good idea, but why painless? But seriously, Doc, you may be able to give me some advice—I mean—you live by your wits, don't you?

DOC. No, I live by other people's lack of wit.

GAY. It comes to the same thing. I'm in a hole, Doc, and I want you to help me out.

DOC. Certainly. That's the best thing I do. Suppose you tell me what seems to be on your mind.

GAY (*easing to C.*). Do you know my mother-in-law?

DOC. No.

GAY. Allow me to congratulate you. (*He shakes Doc's hands.*) Have you ever had any experience with mothers-in-law?

DOC. I should say so. Mine is a sad, sad story. Would you like to hear it?

GAY. Yes—if you keep it clean.

DOC. Splendid! I'll tell you. (*Breaking to R.C.*) Listen. (*He sits on*

the settee.) Some years ago, my mother-in-law came to visit me. In my usual kind and generous manner I took her out for a moonlight row on the river. Gaily we were gliding along, when suddenly—*bang*—we had struck the rapids. The boat sank, and Mother-in-law was drowned.

GAY (*excitedly*). Tell me, where is that river located?

DOC. Ah, my boy. It was a sad, sad day.

GAY. I suppose you went to the funeral?

DOC. No, I went to work. Business before pleasure.

GAY. But all kidding aside, Doc, I'm in trouble—serious trouble. (*He breaks to L.C.*)

DOC. Too much family, eh?

GAY (*sitting on the table*). Too much family is right. My wife's family arrived here about fifteen minutes ago and things have begun to happen already. They generally do when they show up. Mind you, I like them well enough—except my mother-in-law. And there'll be no peace around here while she's in the house. How do you think I'd best get rid of her? Send her a fake telegram calling her back or something like that?

DOC (*rising*). I'll tell you what. Introduce her to me. (*Moving to c.*) I'll take her for a stroll in the Zoo and push her through the lion's cage.

GAY (*joining Doc c.*). No use, Doc, the lion wouldn't have a chance with her. Oh, by the way, didn't you tell me you were a piano tuner or something?

DOC. Why, yes. But what does that matter to you? You haven't a piano.

GAY. Oh yes, I have. It's a present from my father-in-law. It has just arrived and is, at the moment, in the summer house in the garden.

DOC. What are you going to do—give an open-air concert?

GAY. No, I've had to put it there until it's repaired. There's something the matter with it. Nothing serious, just a key broken or a string snapped. Now, you go out there and see what's wrong with it and then report to me.

(*Doc goes R. to the french window.*)

And, listen, I'm keeping it as a little surprise for my wife, so keep it under your hat.

(*Doc removes his hat, looks at it dubiously, then at GAY.*)

DOC. Under my hat! A piano? My God, the man's mad!

(*He exits into the garden.*)

GAY (*moving down to the settee*). Just wait till that piano is fixed. I'll have it played twenty-four hours a day.

(*SALLY enters up c. from L. with a card on a tray.*)

SALLY. A lady to see you, sir.

GAY. What does she want?

SALLY. She didn't say, sir. She merely said she had an appointment.

GAY. I don't know anything about it. Tell her I'm out.

(SALLY exits up c.)

GAY (*reading the card*). "Dolly White." I wonder if she is any relation of the Whites of Wimbledon?

(DOLLY WHITE enters up c. from L.)

DOLLY (*moving down c.*). So you are the man who slapped me in the water. I have been waiting ten years to give you this for saving my life. (*She kisses GAY.*) I will give you another one for slapping me so hard. (*She kisses GAY again.*) Do you know you slapped me so hard that I was black and blue for weeks afterwards?

(GAY gazes at her in amazement.)

GAY. Did I? Where? When?

DOLLY. You are Jack Gay, aren't you?

GAY (*puzzled*). Yes, I think so—yes, yes—definitely!

DOLLY. For a moment, I was not quite sure. Of course, the last time I saw you, you were undressed!

(*As she breaks a little L.C., GAY rushes to the c. door in an agitated manner in case anyone may overhear. DOLLY turns. GAY checks, up c.*)

Let me have a look at you with your clothes on. The last time I saw you I thought what beautiful white skin you had, and I remember, too, you had nice eyes.

GAY. When was all this?

DOLLY. Ten years ago.

GAY (*aside*). What was I up to ten years ago? (*Moving down to DOLLY.*) I think you've made a mistake. You've come to the wrong asylum.

DOLLY. Oh no, this is the address you gave. I will never forget your chivalrous action. But why did you run away? And you don't seem very pleased to see me now after sending for me to come here.

GAY. I never sent for you to come here.

DOLLY. Oh, yes, you did.

GAY. Oh, no, I didn't.

DOLLY (*sing-song*). Oh, yes, you did.

GAY (*sing-song*). Oh, no, I didn't.

DOLLY (*sing-song*). Oh, yes, you did.

GAY. Say, what is this, a singing festival? What do you want?

DOLLY. You know what I want.

GAY. I'm damned if I do. Now look here, Miss, or Missus, or whatever you are, will you do me a favour and get out of here?

DOLLY. Well, I must say that's a nice way to treat me. (*She crosses him to the settee, sits, takes off her gloves, and places them with her bag, on the settee.*) Now, may I see your pupil.

GAY. What? (*He backs a little down L.C.*)

DOLLY. You told me you had a pupil you wanted me to see.

GAY. Would you believe it? (*Starting to move to C.*) Oh, I say now, really——

DOLLY (*rising and going to GAY*). And another thing before we go any further, what about the money?

GAY. Money?

DOLLY. Yes, the money you agreed to pay me. Business is business. Cash down. Give me five pounds or I do not see your pupil. (*She crosses down L.C. in front of the table.*)

GAY (*bewildered*). I've got to give you five pounds just to look at my pupil? (*Aside.*) This dame is as crazy as a March hare. (*To DOLLY.*) Look here, if I show you my pupil, will you get out of here?

DOLLY. I'll go as soon as I've seen your pupil.

GAY (*aside*). Well, I'd better humour her. (*He lifts his eyelids with the fingers of both hands and approaches DOLLY.*) Here you are—look, two pupils!

(DOLLY, alarmed, thinks GAY is mad and backs away from him.)

DOLLY. Why, what's the matter? Don't do that. (*She screams.*) The man's mad! Go away from me! Help! Help!

(*She dashes into the room L. screaming until the door closes behind her.*)

GAY. Well, what do you know about that?

(DOLLY screams loudly off stage.)

Shut up, you—*shut up!* Suffering cats! Whatever next? I'll have to get her out of here before that old bird sees her, or there *will* be trouble! (*He looks through the french window, and calls.*) Hey, Doc! Just a minute! Come here—I want you!

(*He exits through the french window. DOLLY pokes her head through the doorway L., looks around cautiously, and enters.*)

DOLLY. Thank heaven he's gone! Now to make my escape before he returns! (*She crosses to the settee and picks up her bag and gloves.*)

ARABELLA (*off stage*). Is that you, Ima?

DOLLY. Good heavens, someone else! I'll bet I'm in a lunatic asylum!

(*She goes to the door up C., changes her mind, turns, and exits down R. ARABELLA enters up C. from R., followed by SALLY.*)

ARABELLA. I'm sure I heard someone screaming for help. Did you hear anything, Sally?

SALLY. Yes, madam, I thought I did.

ARABELLA. It's very likely that stage-struck daughter of mine going through one of her scenes. To think that a child of mine should anticipate such a life! Sally, go upstairs and see if you can find her.

SALLY. Yes, madam.

(She exits C. and goes upstairs.)

ARABELLA. I'll have a look for her in here.

(She exits down L. Then GAY enters through the french window, followed by DOC, who carries a gun.)

GAY *(moving to C.)*. Now, Doc, you've got to get rid of that woman. She's as crazy as a March hare. Kissed me and then wanted me to give her a fiver, and what not. Now get her out of here, if you have to use force.

DOC *(R.C.)*. Where is she?

GAY. She's in that room.

(He points to the door L. and exits up C. to L.)

DOC *(as GAY goes up)*. Leave it to me, I'll get her out. I used to be chucker-out at the *Green Swan*.

(ARABELLA enters L. DOC stands rigid at C.)

ARABELLA *(moving to down L.C.)*. And now, sir, will you tell me what all this means?

DOC. Certainly, with pleasure. It means that you are not wanted in this house.

ARABELLA. Not wanted?

DOC. That's what I said. Not wanted. As a matter of fact, Mr Gay told me that he hates the sight of you, and I'm to throw you out.

ARABELLA. *Well!*

DOC. Yes, ma'am. And it will give me great pleasure to carry out Mr Gay's orders. Now, will you go quietly or must I tap you on the chin first?

ARABELLA *(moving to C.)*. Just a minute. Am I to understand that Mr Gay has asked you to do this?

DOC. Mr Gay *has* asked me to do this. He also told me to tell you that if you didn't go quietly I was to shoot you in the fracas.

ARABELLA. The wretch! The *fiend!* The *monster!* Call him here at once!

DOC. No use. He says he can't see you and never could.

ARABELLA. I shall inform my husband of your insults.

DOC. Splendid! Send him up and although I am a perfect gentleman, I shall kick him in the shins. Now, get thee gone, woman, get thee gone!

ARABELLA. How dare you call me woman, you—you—you bald-headed old fossil!

DOC. Don't you call me a bald-headed old fossil, you old catfish!

ARABELLA. And don't you call me an old catfish. I'll have you understand, sir, that I have only seen forty-five summers.

DOC. And eighty-five winters.

ARABELLA. Oh! I shall faint. I know I shall faint. (*She retreats to the table.*)

DOC. Don't faint in here—you'll make the place look untidy. Go outside and faint.

ARABELLA. My limbs won't hold me.

DOC. Well, stand on your head for a while.

ARABELLA. Oh, you wretch! Just wait, I'll show you a thing or two. I'll show you who's boss around here.

DOC (*aiming the gun at her*). Yes?

(*ARABELLA screams and exits C. to off R.*)

DOC. That's the way to fix 'em. (*He lays the gun on the settee.*) I wonder where Jack Gay is? (*He goes to the door C.*)

(*GAY enters and meets DOC in the doorway.*)

GAY. Well, Doc, did you get rid of her?

(*DOLLY enters down from room R.*)

DOC. She's evaporated.

GAY. Good. If she returns—shoot her.

(*DOLLY takes up the gun from the settee and aims it at them.*)

DOLLY. Hands up! The first one who lays a hand on me, dies like a dog. (*She aims the gun at GAY.*)

GAY (*moving below the table L.C.*). Splendid! Aim it at him! (*He indicates Doc at C.*) Hey! Put that gun down.

(*DOLLY aims the gun at Doc, who reacts.*)

What do you want to do—kill somebody? (*He picks up the phone.*)

DOLLY. Yes, I do, if you don't let me out of here.

GAY (*into the phone*). Police!

DOLLY. Out of my way, you lunatics!

DOC. Why, bless my soul, if it isn't Dolly White!

GAY. You know this lady?

DOC. Why, of course, I sent for her.

GAY. Isn't she crazy?

DOLLY. No, I'm not, but I thought you were.

GAY. That makes it fifty-fifty. And here's me calling up the police. (*Into the phone.*) Cancel that call and give me back my tuppence. (*He puts the phone down.*)

DOC. Allow me to explain. I saved this lady's life ten years ago, the night you and I attended that midnight bathing party, but at the time I gave her your name instead of mine. Permit me to

make you folks acquainted. This is Mr Gay, Miss White, your pupil's brother-in-law. Mr Gay—Miss White. Miss White—Mr Gay. (*He crosses to the table L.C.*)

GAY (*crossing to DOLLY by the settee*). Really, Miss White, you must allow me to apologize. Permit me to welcome you on behalf of the mayor and his corporation. But anything is apt to happen in this house.

DOLLY. That's all right. Fancy my mistaking you for that gentleman!

GAY. Say! Maybe, you're crazy after all.

DOLLY. Now, may I see your pupil?

GAY. Certainly. (*He holds his eye open.*) Have a good look.

DOC (*in deep thought*). Say, what I want to know is, who was the female I chased out of here with a gun?

GAY (*turning up c.*). What! You pop-eyed old weasel! Did you chase a female out of here with a gun?

DOC. I did. And she didn't appear to like it, either.

GAY. Suffering cats! Now who can that have been? Sally?

DOC. Who's Sally? Another relation?

GAY. Not that I'm aware of.

(*IMA enters from R. and moves to the settee.*)

IMA. Hello, everybody! What's all the excitement?

GAY. Hello, Ima.

DOC (L.C.). Hello, Ima. Ima, permit me to introduce Miss White, your dramatic instructress.

GAY. This is my kid sister-in-law, Miss White. She wants to go on the films.

IMA. How do you do, Miss White. I'm awfully keen on having you teach me. Doctor Knott has told me all about you. When do we begin?

DOLLY (L. of the settee). As soon as you like. Now, if you wish. I must have you ready for tomorrow without fail.

IMA (*crossing to c.*). Oh, Jack! Isn't that lovely!

GAY. I'll tell you when I get the bill.

IMA (*turning to DOLLY*). Shall we go into the garden, Miss White, and talk things over?

DOLLY. With pleasure. Will you excuse us, gentlemen?

GAY } (*together*). { Yes—yes, certainly.
DOC }

DOLLY. Then until later, *au revoir*.

(*DOLLY and IMA exit through the french window R.*)

GAY. Olive oil! Oh! What education! Stroll through the orchard, Miss White, and pick yourself a tin of fruit! (*To Doc.*) By Jove, she's all right. You certainly know how to pick them.

DOC (*moving up to GAY, at c.*). Fine woman, my boy. Been on the stage.

GAY (*easing to R.C.*). What did she do—sweep it? But she's certainly all right. I'll take her out to lunch some day—if she's got any money! (*He picks up the gun from the settlee.*) Now listen, you. Don't start chasing females around here with guns. You'll get me into trouble. Never take a gun to a woman—always use an axe! By the way, how are you getting on with that piano?

DOC (*crossing GAY to the window*). Fine, fine. If you call it a piano. Come on out and I'll show you how far I've got.

GAY (*moving up R.C.*). What do you mean, call it a piano? They tell me it's a very fine instrument.

DOC What is it—a Steinway?

GAY. No, a throw-away!

(*They exit R. through the french windows. Then WILLIE enters up C. from L. with a note in his hand. He crosses towards the french window.*)

WILLIE (*calling*). Sally! (*Crossing back to L.*) Oh, Sally! (*Crossing back to the door R.*) Sally!

(*SALLY enters up C. from the staircase.*)

SALLY. What do you want?

WILLIE (*turning*). Oh! there you are!

SALLY (*C.*). Oh, for goodness' sake, don't bother me. I've got to phone for the doctor.

WILLIE. What for?

SALLY. What for? For Mrs Nagg. She's in hysterics. She has declared war on the whole house, and particularly on Mr Gay. I never saw a woman in such a rage—says Mr Gay is a murderer and hired an assassin to kill her. And she's screaming at the top of her voice for her husband. Do go and find him and tell him to come quickly, and that I've phoned for the doctor. (*She goes to the phone.*) Now, what is Doctor Johnson's number? Oh, I know. (*She lifts the receiver and speaks.*) Central two-o-seven-three.

WILLIE (*crossing C.*). Here, read this note, it's from Cousin Tillie.

SALLY. What does she want?

WILLIE. She evidently wants us to take the baby away. I've been expecting this. She says: "Come for your darling at once, Tillie." (*Moving to R. of the table.*) What will we do?

SALLY. There is only one thing to do. You'd better go and fetch him. (*Into the phone.*) Oh, hello, is this Doctor Johnson? Oh, doctor, can you come over to Mr Gay's house right away? No, sir, it's Mrs Gay's mother. Oh no, sir, not an accident, sir. I see, yes. I can do that and you'll ring through later? All right, doctor. (*She rings off.*) Doctor says he can't come over now, but I'm to put a thermometer in her mouth and take her temperature, and he'll ring through later and I'm to tell him what the thermometer says. (*She goes up stage and takes down a small barometer hanging on the wall.*) This is a thermometer, isn't it?

WILLIE (L.C.). Yes, I think so. But what about baby? What are we going to do about baby?

SALLY (*moving down R.C.*). Oh dear, I'm so upset I nearly forgot all about him. You'd better go over and fetch him. Bring him here and I'll try to keep him out of sight for a day or two. I can hide him in my room until we find another home for him.

WILLIE. All right. I'll go and fetch him now and be back after lunch. Just keep me a snack. (*Crossing to SALLY.*) Here, you'd better keep this note. (*He gives it to her.*) Good-bye, sweetheart. (*He kisses her.*) I'm off.

SALLY. Don't forget to tell your father your mother wants him.

WILLIE. All right, dear. . . . Good Lord! (*He sees Doc through the window—puts a handkerchief over his face, and pantomimes to SALLY.*) Sally! Doc Knott! And he's coming in here. I do hope he doesn't recognize you. But if he should, dear, coax him to keep quiet about our marriage. He seemed to be a pretty good sort and I'm sure he'll keep his mouth shut if you appeal to him. (*He kisses her again.*) Good-bye, dear.

(*He exits up C., to L. Doc enters through the window.*)

DOC. I can't find the kitchen anywhere.

SALLY. Oh, dear, Doctor Knott. I want to ask you a favour. You won't say anything to Mr Gay about our—you know what I mean—you understand—in the register office . . .

(*NOAH is heard coughing off stage L.C.*)

There's someone coming—I'll see you later—(*mysteriously*)—Ssh! Ssh! Until later!

(*They "Ssh" each other several times.*)

SALLY (*referring to the barometer*). I do hope I can get this in her mouth.

(*She exits upstairs with the barometer.*)

DOC. Well, if this isn't a lunatic asylum, it ought to be. (*He goes down R.*)

(*NOAH enters up C., from L.*)

NOAH. Good morning.

DOC (*turning*). Good heavens!

NOAH. Oh dear, oh dear. (*As he moves down C.*) Pardon my emotion, sir, but I am deeply distressed. I do not know you sir. (*He eases to R.C.*) Are you a guest of this house?

DOC (*below the settee*). Well, yes and no. My name is Knott.

NOAH. Isn't it? Why?

DOC. But it is Knott.

NOAH. Not what?

DOC. Not Watt—it's Knott.

NOAH. What is your name?

DOC. Watt is not my name. It is Knott.

NOAH. What?

DOC. Not Watt—Knott.

NOAH. What-not?

DOC. No—not what-not. Knott. Doc Knott.

NOAH (*aside*). Ah, the doctor. He's come to see my wife. (*To Doc.*) How do you do, Doctor. My son William told me they had sent for you. I am Mr Gay's father-in-law.

DOC (*aside*). Ah, the old geezer that gave Gay the piano. (*To NOAH.*) Well, she's a bit mucky.

NOAH (*aside*). A nice way to speak of my wife. (*To Doc.*) Then you have seen her?

DOC (*aside*). Her? That's funny. To call a piano a "her". Still I suppose he's as crazy as the rest of them. (*To NOAH.*) Yes, I was just down taking a look at her. (*Sits on settee R.*)

NOAH (C.). What seems to be the matter?

DOC. Oh, a little of everything.

NOAH. Nothing serious, I hope?

DOC. Well, she's pretty well battered up.

NOAH. Battered up? Did you make a thorough examination?

DOC. Yes. I had her all apart.

NOAH. Apart? Really! And what do you think?

DOC. Her inside is rusty.

NOAH. Her inside is rusty?

DOC. Yes, and I think her pedals want scraping.

NOAH. Pedals want scraping? Is it as bad as that?

DOC. Worse!

NOAH. Worse?

DOC. Her sounding board is badly cracked.

NOAH. Sounding board cracked?

DOC. Do you know her legs are all over blisters?

NOAH. All over blisters? I suppose she's very noisy?

DOC. As noisy as an old Ford.

NOAH. Can't something be done?

DOC. I've tightened up her G string, and touched her up with a glue brush.

NOAH. Touched her up with a glue brush?

DOC. She's dirty, too. Wants a darn good scrubbing.

NOAH. Oh, sir!

DOC. She's all over scratches.

NOAH. Scratches?

DOC. Someone's been striking matches on her baseboard. Now my advice is varnish her legs.

NOAH. What? Varnish her legs? Isn't that extraordinary treatment?

DOC. Yes, but in this case we must be drastic. Now I haven't time for the job just now so I suggest you had better do it at once. Unless you want her to fall apart.

NOAH. Fall apart? Oh, my poor Arabella! Falling apart! Don't fall apart, Arabella.

(NOAH exits moaning up C. to L. DOC follows him up stage and looks after him.)

DOC. He calls a piano Arabella! (He turns from the door.) I know what's the matter with this family. They don't eat and they're crazy for the want of food.

(He exits through the french window. SALLY enters from the staircase with the barometer in her hands. She is almost in tears, and she looks all around for the note.)

SALLY. Oh, where did I put that note from Cousin Tillie?

(She continues to search as GAY enters and watches her.)

GAY. What are you looking for, Sally?

SALLY. A note, sir. I have dropped it somewhere.

GAY. Well, do you need a barometer to find a note?

SALLY. No, sir, I have just taken Mrs Nagg's temperature. Can you read it? (She hands the barometer to GAY.)

GAY (looking at the barometer). Ye gods, wet and windy!

(He hands the barometer back to SALLY. She exits C. to L.—still looking about for the note.)

Lost a note, has she? By Jove, that reminds me, what have I done with mine?

(DOLLY and IMA enter from the garden.)

GAY. I say, Ima, you haven't seen anything of a note I dropped around here, have you?

IMA. No, I haven't.

GAY (searching through his pockets). Funny thing what I did with that. Oh, it doesn't matter. Now listen, don't tell your sister anything about these lessons you are going to have, and don't tell your mother either. We must keep it a secret, and later on I want to surprise them both with your ability. (To DOLLY.) Send all your accounts for this young lady's tuition to me, and give her ten lessons a day—it'll keep her out of mischief.

STELLA (off stage). Oh, Jack!

GAY. My wife! She mustn't see you here. Ima, take Miss White into the garden—have another lesson right away. (As they move R.) I will see you later on at the pergola.

IMA. All right, old dear. Come along, Miss White.

(Doc enters through the french window.)

DOC. How do ye do, ladies?

IMA } (together). { Oh, hello.
DOLLY }

(They exit through the window.)

GAY. Doc, you get out of here, and stay out. I'm busy. (*He urges DOC to R.*) You had better go along with the girls—my wife's coming. Go on, beat it!

(*DOC is about to exit as STELLA enters up C., greatly excited.*)

Too late! (*Turning at up R.C.*) Hello, sweetheart!

STELLA (*moving down L. to GAY*). Darling, tell me, whatever have you done to Mother? She's in an *awful* state! Says that some horrible ruffian threatened to shoot her on your orders.

GAY (*glaring at DOC*). A ruffian on my orders! (*To STELLA*.) My dear, I don't understand.

(*He crosses to the table L.C. as DOC tries to sneak out up R.*)

STELLA (C.). That's what she said and she described him to me. (*She sees DOC.*) Why, there! That's the man! That's the man she described—a hard-looking villainous old reprobate with a red nose—Jack, is that he?

GAY. That? Ha, ha, ha, that, why certainly not! Don't you know who this is, my dear?

STELLA. No.

GAY. Did I never show you his photograph?

STELLA (*puzzled*). I don't recall that you did.

GAY. But surely you heard me mention him—Uncle Berrywhistle?

STELLA. Uncle Berrywhistle?

GAY. Yes, of course. Uncle Berrywhistle from Australia. I haven't seen him for years. He went over there when I was a boy. He has done awfully well. Got a sheep mine.

STELLA. A sheep mine? Really! (*To DOC*.) Why, Uncle!

GAY (*moving to C.*). Oh, he's got ever so many sheep. Millions of 'em. How many sheep have you, Uncle?

DOC (*easing to above settee*). Two.

GAY. He means two millions, but he can't think that high. Uncle, I told you in my letter about getting married. This is Stella—Stella, this is Uncle Berrywhistle.

STELLA. Well, Uncle dear!

DOC (*moving up to STELLA*). My charming niece!

(*Bus.: embracing—GAY slaps his hand.*)

GAY. Cut it out—she bruises easily.

STELLA. Well, this is a surprise.

GAY. You could have knocked me down with a bus!

STELLA. I hope you forgive me for what I said just now.

GAY. Oh, that's all right. He's been insulted by experts.

STELLA. Won't you sit down, Uncle? (*She indicates the chair R. of the table.*)

GAY. Yes, sit down, before you fall down.

(*DOC crosses to the chair. GAY indicates the seat of the chair.*)

GAY. Put it there, Uncle.

DOC (*sitting R. of the table*). That's quite all right, my dear. I admit I look a bit rough and ready.

GAY (*above the table*). You do—you look like a tramp.

DOC. But you see, I've only just arrived and these train journeys are so filthy.

STELLA (C.). Train journeys?

DOC. I mean charabanc.

STELLA (*sitting on the L. arm of the settee*). Charabanc?

GAY (*above the table; nudging Doc*). No, no, what Uncle means is that the train journey up from Southampton was a bit filthy. Don't you, Uncle? (*Aside.*) Be careful, you fathead!

DOC. Yes, yes, of course. I couldn't have meant the train journey from Australia, could I now?

GAY. Of course not. Uncle came over on his bike—er—I mean on a great big boat—didn't you, Uncle?

DOC. Why, certainly. And what a lovely boat trip it was, too. My dear, if you ever visit Australia, don't miss the boat trip.

GAY (*slapping him on the head*). That's an intelligent remark!

STELLA (*moving up to C.*). I shan't. But now, Uncle dear, I must get a room ready for you.

GAY. Oh, really, dear. I don't see how we can manage it.

STELLA. We *are* rather full up, but I think I can manage if you don't mind a smallish room at the top of the house.

GAY. A smallish room is no good for such a biggish uncle—don't forget, dear, he's an Australian. He's used to the wide open spaces. What about the stable? He smells like a horse, anyway. (*He smells at Doc.*) Yes, he smells like two horses!

STELLA. Oh well, you can give him *your* room, can't you, Jack? (*She turns to the settee.*)

GAY. Why, certainly. I never thought of that. Would you like my room, Uncle?

DOC. I should love it!

GAY (*aside*). Well, you're not going to get it! No, my dear, I think Uncle would prefer his hotel. (*Aside, to Doc.*) Say yes, or I'll murder you!

DOC. Yes, my dear, I think the hotel is best. You see, I registered at the hotel first, not being quite sure that I would find you, and I may as well stay there. But I could come over here for my meals.

GAY. You could—but you won't!

STELLA. Why, certainly. What hotel are you staying at?

DOC. The—er—(*He takes a spoon from his pocket.*) The Adelphi.

STELLA. No, Uncle, I insist that you stay in the house with us. I cannot allow my husband's uncle to stay at the hotel.

GAY. Well, since you will have Uncle Berrywhistle stay with us, he must have the Rose Room.

STELLA. Oh, but Jack, I cannot give him the Rose Room. Mother has that.

GAY. Well, then, she will have to get out of it. (*Crossing to above the door L.*) Uncle shall have the Rose Room and no other. (*He rings the bell.*)

Doc. Now, really, don't let me interfere with your domestic arrangements. (*He rises and crosses to R., below the settee.*)

GAY (*moving L.C. to below the table*). It's quite all right, Uncle. My wife insists that you stay here, and for once I'm going to show her I'm master in my own house, and you shall have the Rose Room. It will match the colour of your bugle!

(SALLY enters from C. R.)

GAY. Ah! Sally, you will go upstairs to Mrs Nagg and tell her that she is to vacate the Rose Room immediately, and go and sleep in the garage with the other old corks. Tell her that my Uncle Berrywhistle from Australia is going to have that room.

SALLY. Yes, sir.

(*She exits upstairs.*)

STELLA (*moving to C.*). Jack, this is terrible of you. It will upset Mother dreadfully.

GAY. I don't care if she is upset. She has upset me often enough. Uncle, how would you like your bed made? Will you have sheets or a pillow-case?

Doc. Quite immaterial, my dear nephew, quite immaterial.

GAY. I want to make you comfortable.

Doc. Very well, then. Fill the water jug with whisky.

GAY. Good idea. (*As he crosses R. to Doc.*) And I'll come and sleep with you!

Doc. I am sorry to cause all this upset, but I am entirely in the hands of my nephew.

STELLA (*C.*). Oh, it's quite all right, Uncle, we will find a way out.

(ARABELLA enters, rushing downstairs in a fury.)

ARABELLA (*moving down, L. of STELLA*). Who is the man who wants to sleep in my bed?

GAY (*by the L. end of the settee*). I don't know, but whoever he is, he's a hero.

ARABELLA (*pointing to GAY*). Come away from that viper!

GAY (*R.C.*). Do you mean me?

ARABELLA (*L.C.*). Yes, I do.

STELLA (*C.*). Why, Mother, what do you mean?

Doc (*R.C. below the settee; to GAY*). There's that crazy woman.

GAY (*aside, to Doc*). No, that's my mother-in-law, you sap!

ARABELLA (*moving to below the table, and turning*). Oh, what treachery! My child, my child! What a dreadful plot! My son-in-law to be capable of this! Oh, my dear, I shudder at your fate—

in all the bloom of your youth to be so deceived—so sweet—so kind, so recently married!

STELLA. Why, Mother?

GAY. What the devil is this old antediluvian remnant grumbling about now? What have I done?

DOC. Yes, what have we done?

ARABELLA. Your villainous husband and his hired assassin there—(*pointing to Doc*)—have threatened to turn me out of the house. Threatened to shoot me!

STELLA. Shoot you? Why, Jack?

GAY. I never said anything of the sort, but it's a good idea. Did I, Doc—I mean, Uncle?

DOC. Why no. I . . .

ARABELLA. Silence, sir! Shut up!

STELLA (c.). Why, Mother! How can you talk to Uncle Berrywhistle like that?

GAY (R.C.). Yes, how dare you talk to Uncle Berrywhistle like that?

ARABELLA. That's not your Uncle Whistleberry!

GAY. Berrywhistle, madam, Berrywhistle—from Australia.

ARABELLA. What part of Australia?

DOC. Johannesburg.

GAY. That's in India, you fool!

ARABELLA. It's a lie!

GAY. It's not a lie. He's my uncle and I'll prove it. Here, show her your birthmark. (*He starts to unbutton Doc's shirt.*)

DOC (*protestingly*). Mr Gay—really . . .

ARABELLA. "Uncle" indeed! To me he looks more like a burglar.

DOC. Madam, I—

ARABELLA. Silence, sir! (*To GAY.*) You! You who conceal beneath your coat a heart consumed with vice and iniquity.

GAY. Oh, is that all?

ARABELLA. No, that is not all. (*She goes up to STELLA, displaying the note.*) Stella, read the note that Mr Gay received this morning. I told you I would see it and I have. I found it on the stairs where he dropped it. Read it, and judge for yourself. (*She hands STELLA the note.*)

GAY (*to Doc*). She's found the note about the piano.

DOC. That was careless of you.

STELLA (*reading the note*). "Come for your darling at once, Tillie."

GAY. I'll tell her about it now.

STELLA. Oh, Jack, how could you?

GAY. How could I what?

STELLA. Oh, Mother! (*She goes to ARABELLA, sobbing, R. of the table.*)

ARABELLA. My darling!

DOC. She's got her going that way now.

GAY (*working to R.C.*). Damn it all, madam, this is your work, and I want an explanation. By what right do you come into my house and cause all this upheaval? Don't you think I have troubles enough without you increasing them, you old battle cruiser?

STELLA (*to GAY*). How dare you insult my mother like that. Is it not enough that you have deceived me—

GAY. Deceived you?

STELLA.—without heaping insults upon the mother who bore me.

GAY. She bores me, too.

STELLA. It is to my mother that I owe the knowledge of your treachery. She has opened my eyes and shown you in your true light.

GAY (*to Doc*). What is she talking about?

DOC. I give it up.

STELLA (*moving C.; to Doc*). As for you, sir, go back to Australia with the rest of your sheep.

GAY. That'll make three!

(STELLA goes to ARABELLA.)

ARABELLA. There, there, my child. I will not abandon you, but stand boldly by your side, and I thank heaven I am here to protect you—here to tear the mask from that villain's face.

GAY. Oh, put a sock in it!

DOC. Yes, put a pair of socks in it.

ARABELLA. Oh, you pack of demons!

(She rushes across to them. DOC goes behind the settee. GAY hides behind him.)

You nest of vipers! You biting adders!

(She crosses back to the table. STELLA has moved behind the chair, and, during *ad lib.* tirade from ARABELLA, NOAH enters C. with a small pail marked "Varnish", and a brush.)

NOAH. What is the matter, my dear? Calm yourself.

ARABELLA (*turning, below the chair R. of the table*). What do you want?

NOAH. I'm going to varnish your legs.

ARABELLA faints on the chair R. of the table. STELLA is behind her. IMA and DOLLY enter from the garden. NOAH is furiously painting ARABELLA's legs with the varnish brush, and SALLY appears in the C. doorway, as—

the CURTAIN falls.

ACT II

SCENE.—*The garden behind JACK GAY's house. Afternoon of the same day.*

At the back, a wall or a hedge, with a gate at C. The hedge or a trellis continues a little down stage at up R. to meet the corner of the house which occupies the R. side of the setting, and shows the french windows to the Library. There is a gap in the hedge up R. leading behind the house.

At L., there is a wall with an arched opening somewhat down stage. In the upper L. corner of the setting is a small summer house with a door which faces R. There is a small garden seat down R.C., and a garden chair. Another small seat down L.

(See the Ground Plan at the end of the Play.)

The CURTAIN rises, and a moment later SALLY enters from the house, through the french window, and crosses up to the gate C. which she opens slightly, looking towards L.

SALLY (*calling in a low voice*). Willie?

(WILLIE enters through the gate C. from L.)

Did you get the baby?

WILLIE. No. Tillie was out.

(They move down R.C.)

SALLY. Oh, dear! Whatever shall we do?

WILLIE. Oh, don't worry. I'm going back again directly. I'll get it then.

SALLY. We must get the baby here soon. Tillie will be waiting to leave. She's just phoned me again.

WILLIE (*breaking to c.*). Of course, this *would* happen the very day Mother arrived. (*Returning to SALLY.*) Catastrophe seems to dog her very footsteps.

SALLY. What a fool that father of yours was to plaster her with that varnish.

WILLIE. He was only obeying doctor's orders.

SALLY (*sitting on the seat, R.*). Surely no doctor would ever order a patient's legs to be varnished?

WILLIE. Oh, I don't know. They order patients' throats to be painted. Anyway, Mother is kicking up ructions about it. She can't get her stockings off. (*He sighs.*) She kicks up ructions about everything. They're all dashing about the house like a lot of luna-

tics—trying to get the varnish off. It's going to be an awful job smuggling the baby up to your room, dear.

SALLY. Let me think. I believe I've got a better idea. You trot over to Tillie's place, get the baby and put him here in the summer house until after dark. Then I can slip out and get him indoors. Nobody will ever see him then.

WILLIE. By Jove! That's a great idea! (*Breaking to c.*) And then if I win the fight tonight, we can introduce our little son and heir to the whole family. (*He laughs and returns to L. of the seat R.*) That will be another little shock for Mother.

SALLY. It will be a shock for the whole family, if you ask me. Poor Mrs Gay will have a fit when she finds she is sister-in-law to her own parlour-maid.

WILLIE (*sitting L. of SALLY*). We should worry about that. (*He embraces SALLY.*) I know I've married the dearest, sweetest, most charming little lady in the whole world. (*Bus. of cuddling.*)

(NOAH enters up c. His head is bandaged. He sees WILLIE embracing SALLY.)

NOAH. Oh! Bless my soul! (*He registers surprise.*)

(WILLIE and SALLY start with alarm, WILLIE hastily does business of getting a fly out of SALLY's eye.)

WILLIE. Hello, Father. (*He laughs nervously.*) You see what I'm doing, don't you?

NOAH. No, what are you doing? (*He moves down c.*)

WILLIE. I'm taking a fly out of Sally's eye—ha, ha! (*Bus. of twisting up corner of handkerchief.*)

(SALLY does the bus. of holding down the eyelid.)

NOAH. Oh, I see. That's what you're doing, is it?

WILLIE. Yes, that's it. I suppose you haven't got a fly in your eye, by any chance?

NOAH. No—not by any chance. My eyes are in quite good order, thank you. Is it a very big fly? (*He looks closely at SALLY.*) Maybe it's a horsefly.

WILLIE. No, I think it's a Mayfly.

NOAH. Then it may fly out.

SALLY (*hastily*). Oh, it's quite all right now, thank you, Mr Willie. (*To NOAH.*) Your wife was looking for you in the house just now, Mr Nagg.

NOAH (*grimly*). Yes, I know—that's why I'm in the garden. (*To WILLIE.*) Willie, I thought perhaps we might have a little walk for a few days.

WILLIE (*alarmed*). A little walk?

NOAH. Yes, a little walk.

WILLIE. No, I can't do that.

(SALLY is becoming more desperate.)

NOAH. Why not?

WILLIE. Well, you see, it's like this—I've got somewhere to go.

NOAH. All right, I'll go with you.

WILLIE. Ah yes, *later*—but not *now*. (*He moves as though to go.*)

NOAH. But I can go just as well now as later.

WILLIE (*hurriedly*). Oh, I couldn't think of it. I don't think it would be fair to let you. You see the place I've got to go to is some distance from the other place and besides it's much farther to come back. There—that's plain, isn't it? (*With some contempt.*) You're surely not afraid of Mother, are you?

NOAH. Afraid? Oh no—I'm not afraid—I'm terrified!

SALLY. Poor Mr Nagg—why don't you go away?

NOAH. Away?

SALLY. Yes—a *long* way. Out of her reach.

NOAH. There's no place on *this* earth out of my wife's reach. (*Confidentially.*) You know, of course, she is temporarily insane?

WILLIE (*surprised*). *Temporarily?*

NOAH. Doctor Knott says so. He thinks she's crazy.

WILLIE. He must be a very good doctor.

NOAH. When people go crazy they are not to be trusted—they sometimes turn on their best friends—she's turned on *me* all right. (*He feels the bandage tenderly.*) She's a *very* powerful woman.

SALLY. I'm sure you're mistaken, Mr Nagg. I don't believe people go insane suddenly and without cause.

NOAH. Ah! That's the point. *Is* it sudden? Dr Knott thinks it's been coming on for several days.

WILLIE. But surely you would have noticed it?

NOAH. No. She's been behaving as usual. That's what makes me think the doctor may be right.

SALLY. Why don't you run indoors and see if she's any better?

NOAH. Don't be silly, child.

WILLIE. But you're not as frightened of her as all that, are you?

NOAH (*peevishly*). Let us call it discretion. Discretion is the better part of valour.

SALLY. I think she objected to the varnish. They may have got it off by now.

NOAH (*feeling his head*). That is what comes of carrying out the doctor's orders. He distinctly told me to varnish her legs, and I did so. And this is how she thanks me. (*Holding the bandage.*) I said, "You're not angry with your little king, are you?" And then she crowned me—with a silver coffee-pot. I ran to Doctor Johnson's and he put seven stitches in it.

SALLY. Good gracious!

NOAH (*almost in tears*). And then he charged me seven guineas.

WILLIE. Seven guineas?

NOAH. Yes. A guinea a stitch. You see I'm not registered with any doctor. And I said to him: "Doctor, all I wanted was some plain sewing—no fancy embroidery!"

WILLIE (*to SALLY*). Well, I must be off, Sally. (*He goes up c.*)
Look after the old man. (*He opens the gate.*)

NOAH. I'm coming with you.

WILLIE. You can't.

NOAH. Where are you going?

WILLIE (*hesitates*). I—I'm going to my training quarters.

NOAH. Training quarters?

WILLIE. Yes. My sparring partners are waiting for me.

NOAH. Are they? We both seem to be in the same boat.

WILLIE. Well, anyway, you can't come with me.

NOAH (*dejectedly*). Then where *can* I go?

WILLIE. I don't care where you go, but you're not coming with me. (*Turning in the gateway to SALLY; bus. of holding a baby and pointing to the summer house.*)

(SALLY *nods her assent.*)

NOAH (*seeing them signalling*). What are you two tic-tacking about?

(WILLIE *exits.*)

(*To SALLY.*) Willie is a funny boy—do you know, I think the whole darn family is a little queer in places.

SALLY (*going towards the house*). Well, Mr Nagg, you've made your bed. I'm afraid you will have to lie on it.

NOAH. Maybe I shall. But not tonight. (*He goes towards the archway L.*) Tell me, Sally, where does that little pathway lead? (*He points off L.*)

SALLY. Oh, that leads to the gooseberry bushes.

NOAH (*sadly*). Thank you, Sally. That's just the place for me. I'll hide in the gooseberry bushes—she'll never find me there.

(NOAH *exits L. limping and holding his head. SALLY makes a half movement of sympathy as though she would follow him, then goes towards the house. GAY looks over the wall. He comes from R. and is followed by DOC.*)

SALLY. Poor Mr Nagg!

GAY. Sally!

SALLY (*turning*). Yes, sir.

GAY. Anyone about?

SALLY. No-one, sir.

(*She exits into the house. A moment later, GAY peers round the gateway. DOC's head appears close behind him.*)

GAY (*to DOC*). Pst! Come on, Doc, let's risk it. (*He creeps on c. looking anxiously to R. and L.*) There may be an ambush, but I doubt it.

(DOC *enters, moving down L.C. He is eating a banana.*)

DOC. Are you sure? I don't want to run into that Mother-in-law of yours.

GAY (*easing to R.C.*). I shouldn't mind running into her—

DOC (*surprised*). What?

GAY. —with a steam roller!

DOC. She told me she would have my life, and I think she means it.

GAY. You bet she means it.

DOC. That woman is dangerous.

GAY. Dangerous! Don't talk rot. She is positively deadly! Why, Doc, before she arrived everything was peaceful and serene. Within thirty minutes of her arrival the birds stopped singing, and the flowers began to droop. I tell you she has turned the place into a positive madhouse.

DOC. Yes, but even in a madhouse you can be sure of getting something to eat. I'm as empty as a drum. (*Shouting.*) I'm hollow.

GAY. Well, don't start hollowing here. What do you want to do? Attract the old devil's attention?

DOC. Yes, that's all very well. I don't know what you wanted to come down here for. Aren't there plenty of restaurants in town?

GAY. I didn't feel like eating.

DOC. You could have paid the bill.

GAY. Yes, I suppose I could. That's a great idea. You do the eating and I do the paying. What are you kicking about, anyway? You've got a banana to go on with.

DOC (*munching*). I know. But I wouldn't have had that if the man had been watching his barrow.

GAY. I'm not worried about your food problems. (*He moves up c.*) There's only one thing on my mind at the moment, and that's straightening this thing out with my wife.

DOC (*moving R.C.*). I'll say you're some optimist. (*Turning.*) How do you propose to start?

GAY. That's just it. How?

DOC. Why don't you run into the house and see her?

GAY. Why don't I? Because her mother won't let me, that's why.

(*Doc goes to throw the banana skin on the ground. GAY comes down quickly and takes it away from him.*)

GAY. Hey! Don't throw that thing down here. What do you want to do? Make the place look untidy? (*He throws the banana skin on to the steps leading from the house.*) That's as good a place as any for it. The old bird may come out any minute. By Jove, Doc, she has taken a terrible dislike to our little scheme.

DOC. About the piano?

GAY. It must be the piano. I know of nothing else. (*He crosses R. to the seat.*) I told you she hated music, but, after all, I don't see

why she should go off the deep end about it. Confound it, anyway. It's none of her business. That piano is for my wife.

Doc. Well, why don't you give it to her, and have done with it? Let's shift it into the house right now. (*He starts for the summer house.*)

GAY (*sitting R.*). It's no use. She's locked herself in her room, and I can't even get at her.

Doc (*moving to below the seat L.*). I guess, if your wife were a plate of ham and eggs, I'd find a way to get at her.

GAY. For goodness' sake, can't you think of anything but food? If I could only get a note to her I could straighten the whole thing out. But how to get the note to her, that's the question. There she is locked in her room and her mother doing picket duty with a pickaxe—can't get within thirty yards of her. Now what do you suggest?

Doc. I was thinking, it might be a good idea to see her husband.

GAY. Old Noah? (*Moving to R.C.*) I don't know where he is. He's probably dead by now. (*He turns.*) Don't forget she was massaging him with a coffee-pot when we beat it out of the house.

Doc. Yes, I suppose it's all up with him—the poor old fish.

(*NOAH enters L. and moves to C. Doc is down L. and GAY at R.C.*)

NOAH (*as he crosses*). Jack! Jack!

GAY. Good heavens, Doc! Look who's here! Mickey Mouse! Alive and breathing. Where have you been? We've been looking all over for you.

NOAH. I was hiding in the gooseberry bushes and a pigeon kicked me. And Doctor Knott—ah, doctor. I've got a bone to pick with you.

Doc. Food at last! Where is it?

NOAH. Where is what?

Doc. This bone you're talking about.

NOAH. I am referring to my wife's legs.

Doc. I wouldn't pick your wife's legs if I were starving.

NOAH (*to GAY*). Jack, this has been a terrible day for me. It's a wonder I'm alive.

GAY. You bet it's a wonder you're alive. Now, see here, Pop. You take a tip from me and go far away from here. This is no place for you.

NOAH. I wish I could, but I can't.

GAY. Why not? You've got plenty of money. Why not take a nice long voyage around the world—all by yourself and get away from that old cat?

NOAH (*with dignity*). Please do not refer to my wife as an old cat, sir.

GAY. Well, if you think I am going to refer to her as a kitten, you're crazy.

NOAH. You may not be aware of it, sir, but I love my wife.

(GAY and DOC look at each other and burst into laughter.)

GAY (*totters faintly*). Did you hear that, Doc, he loves Arabella? That's the best one I've heard today. He loves his wife. There's no accounting for taste, some people like spinach.

DOC. I heard him. And may I say I think the old skeezicks is completely bughouse.

NOAH. I was a happy man until I came to your house, Mr Gay. My wife scarcely ever assaulted me at all—and certainly never with a coffee-pot.

GAY. Now for goodness' sake don't blame me for your troubles. It's all your own fault bringing that rotten old piano of yours down here. And another thing I may mention—you never should have got married at all. You're not the type. You can't stand the punishment. (*To Doc.*) Do you know, Doc, I've often wondered how he managed to pluck up enough courage to propose to her. I would love to have a snapshot of him on his bended knees whispering sweet words of love into the shell-like ear of that big stevedore!

NOAH. Allow me to tell you, Mr Gay, that when I was courting, I was a reckless blood.

GAY. And now you're a bloodless wreck! You should have remained single and had a hobby. Why didn't you buy yourself a Meccano set—or raise bees?

NOAH. Bees?

GAY. Certainly. You couldn't have got stung any worse.

NOAH. I tell you I was happy. This would never have occurred if Doctor Knott hadn't told me to varnish my wife's legs.

DOC. I never told you anything of the kind.

NOAH. Don't attempt to deny it. You distinctly told me to varnish her legs.

DOC. Don't be silly. I wasn't referring to your wife. I was referring to the piano.

NOAH. The piano?

DOC. Certainly.

NOAH. But *I* wasn't talking about the piano.

DOC. Well, I didn't know that. *I* thought you were.

NOAH. Heavens! Now I see how it happened!

GAY. Anyway, that explains everything. (*He moves c. to NOAH.*) Now, all you've got to do is to run along indoors and explain matters to your wife. (*He passes NOAH across to R.C.*)

DOC. And we'll come in later on.

GAY. Yes, much later on, and we will place a lily on your chest. (*He goes to the summer house and looks in.*)

NOAH. Yes, I think I will. (*Trembling, he goes R. towards the house.*) Er—er—no. I—I don't think I will after all. I think I'll write her a letter instead.

GAY (*moving to c.*). Oh, damn that piano!

NOAH. That's what I say. It has caused an aching void in my family life.

DOC. It's caused an aching void under my belt.

GAY. That piano has caused more trouble than an earthquake. I wish I'd never seen the wretched thing.

NOAH. So do I. I gave it to my wife as a present, and got seven stitches in my head as a receipt.

GAY. Well, let this be a lesson to you. The next time you give her a musical instrument, give her chloroform at the same time.

(DOLLY and IMA enter from the archway L. They are studying a book.)

DOLLY (*to IMA*). In speaking that line give emphasis to the word "love".

GAY. Say, Doc, there's your girl friend.

(*He goes down R. NOAH eases to c.*)

DOLLY (*seeing them and laughing*). Look at these three poor miserable men. They all look as though they were going to a funeral.

(*She moves with IMA to up L.C.*)

NOAH (*groaning*). I wish I were—to my own funeral.

GAY. It won't be long now.

IMA. Poor old Dad. Don't worry, dear—everything will come out all right.

GAY. Even the stitches. (*He goes up above the seat R.*)

DOLLY. I'm sure the whole thing is just a little misunderstanding.

NOAH. There was no misunderstanding about the coffee-pot.

DOC (*to DOLLY*). Why don't you go indoors and straighten it out for us?

DOLLY (*laughing*). Oh, no! I'm busy with my pupil, Doctor Knott.

DOC. If you *do* go indoors you might bring me back some cold potatoes. That is, if you *do* come back.

DOLLY. Nothing will induce me to face Mrs Nagg. From all accounts she is in a rather dangerous mood.

NOAH. I knew it. (*He groans.*)

GAY (*moving R. to the steps*). Well, I'm not going to be kept out of my own house by the whims of that old dragon. (*He shouts into the house.*) Dragon!

(*The others all start with alarm, especially NOAH.*)

(*To NOAH.*) All right, I'll tell her it was you. I've had enough of her damned nonsense. Now I'm going to get a note to my wife and settle this thing once and for all. Who's got a piece of paper?

DOC (*crossing to GAY, R.*). Here's a letter from my tailor. You can write on the back of that. (*He hands a letter to GAY.*)

GAY (*taking the letter*). Anything important in it?

DOC. Only the usual. "Dear Sir—unless——"

GAY. That'll do. I'll fix this up in no time. (*He moves down to the bench R., sits, and writes.*)

DOLLY. Come along, we will leave Mr Gay to concentrate. Let's go down to the pergola and have a little rehearsal. Come, Mr Nagg, you are to play the part of a Roman gladiator. (*She passes NOAH across to IMA, at L.*)

GAY. He couldn't play a Roman candle!

NOAH. Me? A Roman gladiator? I feel more like a bruised lily.

IMA (*at L.*). Oh, do come along, Pop—it's merely to help me along with my studies. (*She starts to move L.*)

DOLLY. Certainly. It will take your mind off your troubles.

IMA (*at the arch*). Oh, please *do*. Come along. (*She turns to go.*)

NOAH (*crossing DOLLY, to L.*). Well, my dear, I want to do anything I can to please you all. If you think I look anything like a Roman gladiator, I'm quite willing to try. (*Turning at L.*) But I don't feel it—indeed, I don't.

GAY. There's nothing to prevent you feeling like a *wounded* gladiator, is there?

NOAH. I can't gladiate with seven stitches.

GAY. Well, we'll run you up a few more!

NOAH (*to Doc*). And as for you, I hope you never get anything to eat. You old So-and-so!

(*He exits L. with IMA.*)

DOLLY. And you, Doc—you are to play the part of a Scotch warrior.

GAY. That'll suit you, Doc—anything with "Scotch" in it.

(*DOLLY exits L., laughing.*)

DOC (*moving to L.C.*). Are you writing a note to your wife?

GAY. I am. I think this will do the trick. (*He completes the note.*) You see, Doc, I am not asking her to believe me at all, but simply to trust to the evidence of her own eyes. (*As he crosses L.*) I have told you how she likes music. You just wait until she sees that piano, everything will be okay. (*He turns down L.*)

(*SALLY enters from the house, R. She picks up the banana skin from the steps.*)

GAY. What are you doing, Sally?

SALLY. Picking this up, sir. (*She holds up the banana skin.*)

GAY. What for?

SALLY. Mrs Nagg might come out and slip on it and fall down and break her neck.

GAY (*crosses to up R.C.*). That's exactly what I have put it there for. Put it back again.

(SALLY *throws the banana skin down below the steps.*)

Listen, Sally, I want you to do something for me.

SALLY. Yes, sir.

GAY. I have here a note for Mrs Gay. I cannot deliver it to her myself for reasons of a purely private nature, so I am going to appoint you my agent in the matter.

SALLY. Yes, sir.

GAY. That's a good girl.

(SALLY *exits into the house.*)

GAY (*to Doc*). Now, provided that note doesn't get intercepted by that old crocodile of an Arabella, everything will be okay.

DOC. And I can eat?

GAY. You can eat till you bust!

DOC. Did Dolly say something about some Scotch?

GAY. Not Scotch in a bottle.

DOC. I don't care if it's in a bucket. I'm going to it. (*He moves to the arch L.*)

GAY (*following him*). I'll come out with you. I can come back later and straighten this out. Let's go and watch that rehearsal.

(*They both exit, talking. WILLIE enters at the gateway with the baby. He looks anxiously round, then runs to the summer house, and enters it.*)

NOTE: *The door of the summer house faces R. Enter STELLA and ARABELLA from the house, R. STELLA has been crying. ARABELLA is still fuming with rage. ARABELLA moves down L. and STELLA to R.C.*)

STELLA. Oh, Mother, *please* do leave me alone.

ARABELLA. Leave you alone? Certainly not. You don't know how to rule a husband, that's what's the matter with you.

STELLA. One doesn't attempt to rule a man one loves.

ARABELLA. Rot! Piffle! (*She sits, L.*) Men are children, nothing else. Look at your father! Look at *his* idea of a joke! Plastering me with varnish. But I taught *him* all right. He won't do *that* again in a hurry.

STELLA (*taking the note out of her dress*). I can't believe in Jack's deceitfulness. It's not a bit like him. (*She sits R.C.*)

ARABELLA. *Every* man is a bundle of deceit. I *know*—I've had experience of it.

STELLA (*looking at the note*). I'm sure there must be some mistake. (*She reads.*) "Come for your darling, at once. Tillie."

ARABELLA. Well, she asks him to come for her. Isn't that proof positive?

STELLA. I—I—don't know. (*She is about to throw the note away.*)

ARABELLA (*rising*). Don't throw that away, we shall need that note as evidence. I picked it up on the stairs this morning. It

must have fallen out of his pocket. Many a man has been ruined by his pockets.

(*WILLIE enters from the summer house. He moves to up c., starts with surprise at seeing STELLA and ARABELLA.*)

STELLA. Oh, Willie—my dear, I'm so unhappy.

WILLIE (c.). Why? (*Moving down c.*) Won't the varnish come off?

ARABELLA (*angrily*). Don't mention varnish in *my* presence.

WILLIE. Oh, sorry, Mother.

ARABELLA. So I should hope.

STELLA (*to WILLIE*). It's all about Jack. I have proof that he is carrying on a secret flirtation.

WILLIE. Jack? Don't be silly, dear. Jack wouldn't do a thing like *that*.

ARABELLA. How do *you* know? You're a mere boy.

STELLA. I don't know what to do about it.

ARABELLA. I would know what to do about it. I'd divorce him.

WILLIE. Oh, be quiet, Mother—you're only making matters worse. (*To STELLA.*) What's the name of the woman old Jack is supposed to be keen on?

STELLA. Tillie.

WILLIE (*puzzled*). Tillie? That's strange.

ARABELLA. And *why* is it strange, pray?

WILLIE (*confusedly*). Oh—no reason—no reason at all. Only—only—only it's rather an uncommon name, don't you think?

ARABELLA. I think it's a decidedly *common* name—and the name of a common person.

WILLIE. Oh, I don't know.

ARABELLA. Well, I *do* know—and what is more, I am going to confront my son-in-law with the evidence.

WILLIE. Evidence? What evidence?

ARABELLA. You're too young to be told. Pray leave us.

(*WILLIE goes up to the gate. SALLY enters from the house, and sees*

WILLIE. WILLIE *points to the summer house—pantomime bus. between*

WILLIE and SALLY *indicating baby in summer house.*)

ARABELLA (*to SALLY*). What's the matter with the girl?

(*WILLIE exits hurriedly c.*)

SALLY (*moving down to STELLA*). I beg your pardon, madam—a note from Mr Gay. (*She hands the note to STELLA.*)

STELLA. Very well, you may go.

(*SALLY looks longingly in the direction of the summer house.*)

ARABELLA (*moving to c. Sharply, to SALLY.*) You may go!

SALLY. Thank you, ma'am.

(*She exits into house.*)

STELLA (*turning the note over in her hand*). A note from Jack. I won't read it. Yes, I will—it may be an explanation.

ARABELLA (*contemptuously*). Explanation!

STELLA (*reading*). "Dear Sir—Unless——"

ARABELLA. What?

STELLA (*turning the note over*). Oh, it's on the back.

ARABELLA. On whose back?

STELLA. The note. Here it is. Listen. (*She reads.*) "My dear Wife——"

ARABELLA. They always start like that.

STELLA (*reading*). "My dear Wife—If you will look in the summer house, you will find the cause of all our trouble. I meant to give you one sooner, but did not think we could afford it. I know it is not a very handsome one, but it is the best I could do. Please accept it with my love, Jack." Whatever can it mean?

ARABELLA. It's some trick, I'll be bound! We'll look in the summer house and see for ourselves. (*She goes to the summer house door, looks inside, and starts back breathless with horror and amazement.*) Oh! My God! (*She runs towards the house.*)

STELLA. Oh—what is it? (*She runs to the summer house, looks inside, utters a piercing shriek, and makes towards ARABELLA.*) Oh! It's—a—baby!

ARABELLA (*below the steps*). I knew I was right. So that's the meaning of the note he received this morning.

STELLA (R.C.). Oh, Mother! It must be a practical joke!

ARABELLA. Joke? This will be no joke for Jack Gay! You must not remain another moment under his roof. You must come indoors at once and pack your things. Tomorrow we will go to the lawyers and commence proceedings for divorce—your husband is rich, isn't he?

(STELLA, *sobbing, nods.*)

Very well, we'll make him pay for this, the wretch! We'll divorce him. (*She puts her arms around STELLA's shoulder and leads her towards the house.*)

(*They exit, STELLA crying bitterly. SALLY enters from behind the house. She tiptoes to the summer house and runs inside. WILLIE enters through the gateway. He looks round cautiously, then goes towards the summer house. SALLY enters from the summer house, carrying the baby.*)

WILLIE. Sally! Is he all right?

SALLY. Yes—perfectly—bless him! (*To the baby.*) Mamma's ickle darling!

WILLIE (*anxiously*). They didn't see him, did they?

SALLY. Who, dear?

WILLIE. Mother and Stella.

SALLY. Of course not. They've got too much on their minds as it is.

WILLIE. I say, dear—I don't like the idea of leaving him here until dark.

SALLY. Neither do I.

WILLIE. I think we can take a chance and get him up to your room. They're all down by the pergola rehearsing some rot or other.

(ARABELLA and STELLA are heard indoors arguing.)

And Mother and Stella are raising Cain in the drawing-room.

SALLY. I'll slip in the back way and take him upstairs to my room.

WILLIE. That's the idea. You run along now, and for goodness' sake don't let anyone see you.

SALLY. All right, dear. Aren't you going to the gymnasium?

WILLIE. Yes—I'm just going to get my things. Just a minute, dear, and I'll see if the coast is clear.

(He goes off R., behind the house.)

SALLY (kissing the baby). No trouble to anybody! Mamma's little darling.

(WILLIE re-enters and signals her.)

WILLIE. All right, dear.

(They both exit R., behind the house, quickly. ARABELLA and STELLA enter from the house. ARABELLA is in a very excited state and is speaking to STELLA as they enter.)

ARABELLA (crossing to up c.). If you take my advice you will not see your husband before you go.

STELLA (moving down to below the seat R.C.). I can't leave without seeing him. He may deny it.

ARABELLA. Of course, he'll deny it—what man wouldn't?

STELLA. He may ask my forgiveness.

ARABELLA. Of course, he will, and if he does you'll weaken.

STELLA. Well—I suppose I can please myself about that.

ARABELLA. If you let this scoundrel talk you over, I'm finished with you, so there!

GAY (off stage). Stella! Stella!

STELLA. It's Jack—listen!

ARABELLA (grimly). I'm listening.

(GAY enters L., gaily. He sees ARABELLA, who is standing upstage c.)

GAY. Ugh! (He salutes ARABELLA.) Hello, Sergeant! (Crossing c. to STELLA.) Well, darling, how's every little thing?

STELLA (brokenly). Oh, Jack—how could you?

GAY. How could I what?

ARABELLA (to GAY). Be careful what you say, sir. I'm here, don't forget.

GAY. I'd give a hundred pounds if I could forget that!

ARABELLA. Rude creature!

GAY (*to STELLA*). Well, dear, you received my *billet doux*?

(*STELLA cries.*)

ARABELLA (*to GAY*). Yes, sir—she *did* receive your little *billet doux*!

GAY (*to STELLA*). And you have looked in the little summer house?

(*STELLA cries louder.*)

ARABELLA. She *has* looked in the little summer house.

GAY. I'm not talking to *you*.

ARABELLA. No—but *I'm* talking to *you*.

GAY. You're always talking to somebody. It's a damn bad habit. If you want to reach me, write me a letter and I don't have to read it. (*To STELLA*.) Well, honey, how do you like it?

STELLA. Oh, it's too cruel!

ARABELLA (*to GAY*). Stop tormenting her, you coward! (*She goes down L.C.*)

GAY (*to ARABELLA*). Keep quiet! Why can't you let Stella speak for herself? She can surely say whether she likes it or not.

STELLA (*confronting GAY, and speaking passionately*). It's the worst kind of insult to even *ask* such a question. How dare you bring the hateful thing here? How *dare* you? (*She goes to the seat R.C. and sits.*)

GAY (*puzzled*). I brought it here because I thought you wanted one in the house.

ARABELLA. The cold-blooded villain! Oh, the monster!

GAY. Now, you will admit it would look nice in the drawing-room.

STELLA. *That*—in my drawing-room? Oh—— (*She sobs.*)

ARABELLA. Do you think I would allow my daughter to have it in her drawing-room? (*She sits L.*)

GAY (*moving to L.C.*). And why shouldn't your daughter have one in her drawing-room? The best people in town have them in their drawing-rooms.

ARABELLA. I don't see how *you* can possibly know what the best people have?

GAY. Oh! Being sarcastic as well as ugly, are you? Allow me to tell you, Mrs Nagg, that I move in very high society in this town.

ARABELLA. Indeed!

GAY. Yes, indeed. And there isn't one of my friends who hasn't done the same for his wife as I have done for mine!

ARABELLA (*sarcastically*). Then it must be quite an epidemic.

GAY. Whether it's an epidemic or not, their wives were all delighted.

STELLA. Delighted indeed! What nonsense!

GAY. Of course they were delighted. (*Moving to c.*) Harrison gave his wife one three weeks ago, and she was tickled pink. Watson gave his wife two—one for the drawing-room, and one for the library. And that old sea captain, Captain Peterson down here at the Gables had one sent all the way from China. You know how careless sailors are? Well, it appears he left it in Shanghai two years ago, so he sent for it, and when it arrived his wife was so pleased—there's another one on the way! I think every married woman is entitled to at least one. Why, if your mother had behaved herself, I'd have given her one!

ARABELLA. *Oh!!*

STELLA (*rising*). Then all I can say is, it's disgraceful!

GAY. Disgraceful, eh? Is that my reward for all my trouble? I knew your mother wouldn't like it, but I didn't think you would object.

ARABELLA. You didn't think she would object?

GAY. Oh, lie down and die! You make me tired.

ARABELLA. I will *not* lie down and die. What sort of a wife do you think you've married, anyway?

GAY. I'm beginning to wonder. Stella would have been all right about this if you hadn't interfered.

STELLA. Indeed I wouldn't. There are limits.

GAY. You bet there are limits, and your mother is all of them. (*He crosses above STELLA to R.*)

STELLA (*c.*). I wasn't prepared for such a brazen attitude. If you had denied it, or tried in any way to show repentance for what you have done, I might have forgiven you—in time. But this—this is unpardonable! (*She starts up stage.*)

GAY. I say, Stella, you have been worked up by this poisonous old hag!

ARABELLA. Old what, sir?

(*She crosses to GAY R. He picks up the chair for protection, holds it between them.*)

Allow me to tell you, sir, that in my time, I was considered a great beauty, and was very much sought after.

GAY. Who by? The police?

ARABELLA. No! Colonel Watson, the big-game hunter, was always after me. (*She crosses back L.*)

GAY. You bet he was after you—with an elephant gun! (*He puts the chair down.*)

STELLA (*coming down c.*). Be quiet! I won't have my mother so insulted. If only I had known what kind of man you were, you'd never have persuaded me to marry you.

GAY. And if I had known what a narrow-minded woman you are, you wouldn't have seen my heels for dust. Now laugh that off!

STELLA. What are you going to do about *that*—in *there*? (*She points to the summer house.*)

GAY. Going to have it taken away, so let that end it. (*He moves down below the R. seat.*)

ARABELLA. End it? Oh no, Mr Gay—not by any means. That is going to *begin* it.

GAY. What do you mean?

ARABELLA. Do you think we are such fools as to let the matter end here?

GAY. By what right do you interfere?

ARABELLA (*dramatically; going to STELLA and putting her arm round her*). The right of a mother! *I*, sir, am a mother—you are not!

GAY. No! Not that I am aware of.

STELLA. He might be *anything* after what has happened.

(*DOC enters L. He looks on in some amazement, easing down L.*)

ARABELLA (*to GAY*). By this time tomorrow you will know what our intentions are—from our lawyers.

DOC. But I say, surely they're not making a song and dance about that little surprise packet in the summer house!

GAY. They certainly are—it seems to be very unpopular.

(*GAY sits on the garden chair R. and toys idly with the banana skin during the ensuing scene.*)

ARABELLA (*to DOC*). Nobody asked you to intrude on this conversation.

DOC. Oh, all right—I'll go.

GAY. You stay where you are. Sit in the flower-bed and be a thistle.

ARABELLA (*moving to L.C.; to DOC*). It's my belief you are nothing more than a rank impostor, and you know more than you care to say about this little "surprise packet"—as you call it.

DOC. Well, I certainly had something to do with it.

GAY. Of course he did. He helped me.

ARABELLA (*to STELLA*). There! You heard that! There's evidence, if ever there was!

DOC (*to GAY*). Leave this to me. (*Moving up c. between ARABELLA and STELLA.*) Now, ladies, I can straighten this out in no time.

STELLA (*to DOC*). Tell me the truth, please. My life's happiness is at stake.

DOC. Steak! That sounds like food. Well, it's like this. Your husband suggested having it put in there so that I could tinker away at it before you saw it.

ARABELLA } (*together; horrified*). What!
STELLA }

DOC. You must understand, ladies, I'm a bit of an expert in that direction. I can work wonders with a hammer, some nails and a chisel.

STELLA. A chisel?

DOC. Sure! I could see what was wrong with this one. Its leg wanted easing so I broke it off, sawed off a couple of inches and stuck it on again with glue.

ARABELLA. The monster!

DOC. I dare say I've made a bit of a mess but we can soon clean that up—and when we get it indoors, it will make twice the volume of sound.

STELLA. Good gracious! The man talks like a butcher. (*To GAY.*) And you consented to having it treated in this manner? You, a man I have always considered the soul of kindness.

GAY (*to STELLA*). I don't see that it matters to you how it's treated—you don't want it.

(*STELLA goes up R.C. towards the house.*)

ARABELLA. The man is absolutely callous. (*Looking at DOC belligerently.*) And as for you, sir, (*sarcastically*) *Uncle Berrywhistle!*—you ought to be in jail.

(*As ARABELLA goes to follow STELLA through the french window GAY deliberately throws the banana skin in front of her. She ignores it entirely, walks indignantly to STELLA and both exit into the house. GAY registers keen disappointment and laughs. DOC looks at GAY and then at the banana skin at his feet, and likewise laughs.*)

GAY (*rising*). By gosh! She's missed it!

(*GAY crosses G. to DOC, picks up the banana skin and places it in his pocket for future use. NOTE: This is also a definite laugh, properly timed.*)

DOC. Well, what do you know about that?

GAY. Did you ever meet a woman like it in your life? All this fuss over a rotten old piano. (*He crosses DOC to L.*)

DOC. I say, where are you going?

GAY (*turning at the arch*). I'm going to find old Nagg, and make him tell them that it's his.

(*GAY exits L.*)

DOC (*moving down L.C. and calling after GAY*). I say, if you *should* come across any food, bring it back here to me. I'm about all in, and that Scotch they talked about was only a rumour. Ah well, peace at last. (*He stretches, yawns, and sits down weakly, L.*)

(*SALLY and WILLIE enter from the house. They see DOC.*)

WILLIE (*to SALLY*). Now, here's your chance.

(*He runs across the stage and exits L., touching DOC as he passes.*)

Hello, Doc!

SALLY. Oh, Doctor Knott, at last I've found you alone.

DOC. Oh, is somebody else looking for me?

SALLY. I wonder if I can coax you to keep our secret?

DOC. I'll keep anything you like, my dear—only let me have a little rest and some nourishment. (*He rises and meets SALLY at c.*)

SALLY. You know the secret I mean?

DOC. Oh yes, about your toothache this morning.

SALLY. No, no—I didn't have toothache. I just didn't want you to see my face.

DOC. Your face? I've seen many worse faces than yours. By the way, if you happen to be cooking dinner, don't let me detain you.

SALLY. I had to conceal my feelings somehow.

DOC. *Your feelings!* It must have been love at first sight.

SALLY. It was. Oh, it *was*. But I didn't want anyone else to know.

DOC. Quite so—bashful, no doubt.

SALLY. From the moment I saw you, I knew my life's happiness depended on you.

DOC. Oh, I've clicked.

SALLY. I know I've been indiscreet, but you mustn't blame me.

DOC. Blame you? My dear girl, how could you help it?

SALLY. Then you *do* admire my choice?

DOC. You might have travelled farther and fared worse!

SALLY. I know people will say I might have chosen a handsomer man.

DOC. Oh, I don't know.

SALLY. And a richer one, too. But what does *that* matter. Why, if it came to that, I could earn enough for both of us.

DOC (*with interest*). I'm very glad to hear that—I can't.

SALLY. Then you will keep our secret?

DOC. Eh? Oh yes, of course.

SALLY. And some day we can declare our marriage to all the world.

DOC (*aside*). Gee! She's going to marry me now. (*To SALLY.*) The sooner the better.

SALLY. Yes—that's what I say. (*She eases to R.C.*) Oh, Doctor, you are *so* good.

DOC (*following her*). That's all right, my dear. (*He embraces SALLY, and kisses her.*)

(*GAY enters L., followed by WILLIE, who, being behind, does not see*

SALLY. SALLY reacts on seeing DOC and SALLY embracing.)

GAY. Sally! I am surprised!

(*SALLY looks at GAY in alarm, and runs off into the house. DOC, at R.C., is embarrassed. WILLIE looks from GAY to DOC, but does not realize what has happened.*)

GAY. Well, I'm hanged! You—you messy old medico! Aren't

you ashamed of yourself? I leave you alone here for a minute and find you kissing Sally.

WILLIE. What's that? Kissing who?

GAY. What do you know about that, Bill? Doc here has just been kissing Sally.

WILLIE. I don't believe it. (*He moves up c.*) It's a lie.

(*He dashes off into the house.*)

GAY (*crossing R.C.*). Now what the hell's the matter with Willie?

DOC. I expect he's been bitten by his mother. (*He goes down L.C.*) Did you find Nagg?

(*ARABELLA enters up R., behind the house. She hides behind the hedge in view of the audience and overhears the conversation.*)

GAY (*moving c.; to Doc*). I couldn't see him anywhere, but the secret of the summer house is going to be cleared up right now.

(*ARABELLA betrays keen interest.*)

DOC. What are you going to do with it?

GAY. I'm going to destroy it. I know it's a wicked thing to do, but there will be no peace in the house while it is here.

(*ARABELLA nods grimly.*)

(*To Doc.*) Do you want it?

DOC. No fear—I wouldn't have it as a gift.

GAY. Something's got to be done with it.

DOC. Yes, you've got to get it off your hands.

GAY. Let's take it out to the woodshed and chop it up in small pieces, then we'll bury it deep down in the ground and no one will ever hear of it again.

(*ARABELLA registers horror.*)

DOC. That'll be a blamed hard job.

GAY. I'll tell you what we'll do. You remember where they were doing that blasting this morning. Well, the foreman is a friend of mine. Tell him I sent you, and get a stick of dynamite from him. Bring it back here and we'll blow the darned thing up, summer house and all. (*Breaking to R.C.*) They want excitement around here—well, we'll give them some!

(*ARABELLA exits quickly behind the house.*)

DOC. That's a good idea (*Moving up c.*) It'll show your missus who's the big noise round here. I'll go and fetch a stick of dynamite.

(*He exits c. on his speech.*)

GAY (*shouting after Doc*). Bring back two—one for the old woman. I'll fix things up in here.

(*He exits into the summer house. ARABELLA enters from behind the house and moves L., looking about in great agitation. WILLIE comes from the house and starts towards the gateway.*)

ARABELLA (*turning at L.C., and seeing him*). Oh, Willie!

WILLIE (*up c.*). What is it now, Mother?

ARABELLA. This foul murder must be prevented.

WILLIE. Oh, don't talk such rot, Mother—I'm looking for Sally.

ARABELLA. Will you listen to *me*! You must go to the police station immediately, or there will be a murder done in this house.

WILLIE. I've got to get to my training quarters. Send someone else.

ARABELLA. Oh! How can you be so callous? I tell you a murder is being planned under our very noses and the victim of it is a poor little innocent baby.

WILLIE (*frightened*). A baby? (*He moves down c.*)

ARABELLA. Yes, a baby. (*Moving to him.*) A baby arrived here today and Jack Gay and that murderous-looking Doctor Knott are planning to murder it.

WILLIE. Good heavens!

ARABELLA. Run quickly! They are desperate! Get an officer!

WILLIE. Guard that baby until I get back. Jack Gay must be a raving lunatic. (*He dashes up c. to the gate.*)

ARABELLA. He's worse than that.

WILLIE. If anything happens to that baby—*Oh!*

(*He rushes off c. to L. ARABELLA goes down L.C. GAY enters from the summer house, singing "Il Toreador", and playing an imaginary piano, unconscious of ARABELLA's presence. As he gets down c. he discovers ARABELLA, turns briskly to the house, and starts to go up the steps, still singing.*)

ARABELLA. There you are, you villain! Come back here, sir. We'll soon have you and your imbecile uncle behind prison bars.

GAY (*coming down from the steps*). Now what's the matter?

ARABELLA. The matter? Hark at him! His soul stained with sin, and he asks what's the matter? But I'll put a stop to your foul plan.

GAY. There's something very mysterious going on here.

ARABELLA (*crossing to him*). It's no mystery to *me*, Mr Gay.

GAY. Well, it's a mystery to *me*. I've always known you to be a wicked old mischief-maker—

ARABELLA. Mischief-maker?

GAY. Look here, Mrs Nagg. You take a delight in butting into my affairs, but you've gone a bit too far today, and I want an explanation.

ARABELLA. Explanation, indeed! That's decidedly rich. Perhaps you can explain why you brought that miserable object here? (*She points to the summer house.*)

GAY. I brought it here because I thought it would amuse my wife.

ARABELLA. *Amuse her?* (*Breaking L.*) You must have an extraordinary sense of humour.

GAY. Well, whether I have or not, it's going to be done away with. So that's that!

ARABELLA (*turning at L.C.*). Oh—is it?

GAY. Yes, it is—and quickly, too.

ARABELLA. You coward!

GAY. Coward, eh? To destroy what's my own?

ARABELLA. Your own, is it?

GAY. Yes, my own—and I'm sorry I ever had the damn thing! (*He paces up R.C. and down C. in agitation.*)

ARABELLA. Yours and whose? Tell me that.

GAY. Well, I will tell you that. I'm really only taking care of it for a friend.

ARABELLA. Oh, I see. Now we *are* going to learn something! (*She sits L.*)

GAY (*at C.*). You've got a lot to learn, and it's time you did. That which you call a "miserable object" is only mine by adoption.

ARABELLA. Ha! A thin excuse—and not in the least original.

GAY. It's more yours than mine, anyway.

ARABELLA. Explain yourself, Mr Gay.

GAY. I told you I was taking care of it for a friend.

ARABELLA. And who is that friend?

GAY. Your old man, Noah Nagg!

ARABELLA (*rising, horrified*). Oh!

GAY. Put that on your needles and knit it!

ARABELLA (*angrily indignant*). What? (*Going towards GAY.*) My husband? How dare you insinuate such a thing?

GAY. Yes, madam, your husband.

ARABELLA. So you are trying to lie yourself out of this disgraceful affair by blaming it on my poor husband.

GAY. You needn't take my word for it. Ask him yourself. He said you hated the sight of it, and wouldn't have it about the house. And as for that note you kicked up such a fuss about—that was Noah's, too!

ARABELLA. Oh!—if only this proves to be true—I'll annihilate him!

(*GAY takes the banana peel out of his jacket pocket, looks at it meaningfully, and hides it behind him.*)

GAY. I'd have said so before only I didn't want to get poor old Noah into trouble.

ARABELLA. Trouble? Trouble is no name for what's coming to that man!

GAY. It may have been mean to split on the poor old chap. Poor old Noah!

ARABELLA. Mean? Oh, to think that such a black heart should beat beneath a white shirt. So this is why Noah has been avoiding me all day, is it? Where is he? Where is he?

GAY (*moving down R., below the seat*). Don't ask me. He's liable to be anywhere.

ARABELLA. I'll find him. (*She runs up to the gateway, turns, sees a brick by the summer house, and picks it up.*) And when I do get my hands on him—he'll wish he'd never been born. Come with me and help me find him. (*Moving down C.*)

GAY (*moving up R.C.*). Go and find him yourself—and take your lipstick with you! I'm going to find my wife. (*With his eyes still fastened on ARABELLA, he throws the banana skin between the gates.*)

ARABELLA. Coward! But I'll find him and quickly, too!

(*ARABELLA goes up C. in fury, again ignores the banana skin, and exits off R. GAY, registering disgust at her having missed it, exits into the house, calling—Stella! Stella! IMA enters the arch L. She looks around and calls to off L.*)

IMA. It's all right, Miss White—no-one about. (*She crosses to R.*)

(*DOLLY and NOAH enter L. NOAH wears a laurel wreath over his bandage and is apparently extremely nervous.*)

DOLLY (*to NOAH*). Come along, Mr Nagg. (*As she crosses to C.*) It's nice and quiet here and we've ever so much more room. (*Crossing down L. to the seat.*) Let's just run through that scene once more.

NOAH (*moving to L.C.*). No, no, really, I do think I ought to go and find my wife.

IMA. Oh, Dad, don't be a spoilsport. When Mother wants you, she'll find you quickly enough.

NOAH (*easing to C.*). Yes, that's what I'm afraid of. It is always safer to find her first.

DOLLY (*to NOAH*). Now, you know, all this rehearsal is very good for Ima. She's got all the makings of a really good actress.

NOAH. I'd like to do anything to help, but really I do think I ought to find Mrs Nagg—I've got a feeling about it.

DOLLY. Well, we won't keep you long. Now, come, take your positions.

NOAH. I've got a very strong feeling about it!

DOLLY. Ima, you're up stage. I am sitting on the rustic bench, and Mr Nagg—

NOAH (*who has been looking round nervously*). Yes, Miss White.

DOLLY. Oh, *do* please pay attention!

NOAH. Yes, Miss White.

DOLLY. You are here—behind me.

(*IMA moves up C. NOAH moves L.C. above DOLLY.*)

Now, Mr. Nagg, let me see how well you can make love——

NOAH (*miserably*). Oh—really—don't you think we could dispense with that part of it?

DOLLY. Certainly *not*!

NOAH. Is it *really* necessary?

DOLLY. Of *course*! Come along now, don't be bashful.

NOAH. I wish I hadn't got such a strong feeling.

DOLLY. Now, you know how they do it on the stage. You come up behind me, clasp me round the waist, take my hand in yours and breathe passionate adoration down the back of my neck. Go on—do that.

NOAH. All of it?

DOLLY. Every little bit.

NOAH. The neck part as well?

DOLLY. That's *most* important. Now you know your first line, it starts: "Fear not, beloved, here is your lover brave and wild."

NOAH (*hesitates*). Oh, yes, I'm supposed to be wild—you couldn't make it mild, could you?

DOLLY. No.

NOAH. One can but do one's best, can one but! (*He sits R. of DOLLY.*) *Nil desperandum.* (*He clasps DOLLY passionately in his arms and gives a very bad rendition.*) Fear not—beloved—here is thy lover brave and—wild.

DOLLY (*leaning her head on NOAH's shoulder*). And can I always trust in you?

(*ARABELLA enters behind the wall, looks over, sees NOAH embracing DOLLY, registers shock and anger, stands watching, and raises the brick.*)

NOAH. Always—even unto the end. You and your child shall be my only care.

DOLLY. My hero!

NOAH. My love!

(*They embrace.*)

DOLLY (*to NOAH*). And no one will ever know?

NOAH. No one will ever know.

ARABELLA (*shouting*). Liar! (*She throws the brick.*)

(*IMA screams. NOAH and DOLLY break apart. NOAH rushes off madly through the arch L., followed by DOLLY. ARABELLA comes through the gate and runs after them.*)

IMA (*screaming*). Jack! Jack!

(*GAY enters from the house.*)

GAY. Now what's the matter?

IMA (*pointing L.*). Mother's suddenly gone mad!

GAY. Ye gods, it's all my fault! (*Shouting.*) Hey, you, wait a minute!

(*He dashes after them off L. STELLA enters from the house.*)

STELLA. What's the matter?

IMA (*pointing L.*). Mother's going to murder poor old Pop!

STELLA. Good heavens!

(*She dashes off L. after GAY. SALLY enters from the house.*)

SALLY (*crossing down C.*). What is it? (*She looks off L. and sees the rest running.*)

IMA. They've all gone mad!

(*SALLY dashes off L. after the others. IMA follows to L., checks there, and turns as DOC enters up C. at the gateway.*)

DOC. Where's Jack Gay?

IMA. Running up the road. I'm going to join them.

(*She exits after the others.*)

DOC. Well, I suppose I can do this just as well without him. (*He takes a stick of dynamite from his pocket.*) I wonder which end of this you light? This must be it. (*He lights the fuse.*) Now for the big blow out. (*He goes into the summer house.*)

(*NOAH, leading the chase, dashes on through the gate C., closely followed by DOLLY, ARABELLA, GAY, STELLA, SALLY and IMA. They all dash into the house except IMA who is intercepted by DOC, who comes out of the summer house. During this, there is great excitement, shouting, etc.*)

DOC. What's the matter?

IMA. I don't know, but you'd better come along.

(*IMA takes DOC by the hand and they follow the others into the house. The chase is continued. NOAH dashing wildly from back of the house. He looks wildly round in alarm, seeks a hiding-place and dashes into the summer house. He is followed by DOLLY who looks for him, crying: "Mr Nagg, Mr Nagg." GAY follows on after DOLLY with ad lib. remarks: "Have you seen him, Miss White?" "Noah, where are you?" etc. STELLA follows GAY on, screaming. STELLA is followed by SALLY, IMA, then DOC, pursued by ARABELLA with a rolling-pin. All is confusion. STELLA, IMA and GAY are down R. SALLY is down L. DOC is down L.C. with ARABELLA.*)

GAY. Will you listen?

ARABELLA. What for?

(*There is a terrific explosion. The summer house collapses showing NOAH with his face blackened and his clothes blown off. He stands in the ruins with the wreath on his head, in his underwear and red socks. A wide gap is seen through the wall behind the summer house showing the street and houses across the way. WILLIE enters with a policeman, also villagers, etc. ARABELLA faints into DOC's arms.*)

1ST CURTAIN.

2ND CURTAIN: (*NOAH comes down stage playing the keyboard of the piano like a banjo.*)

3RD CURTAIN: (*Policeman has one hand on GAY's shoulder and the other on NOAH's.*)

NOTE: *A hurry music is played all through the chase, until fall of CURTAIN, when orchestra goes back to CURTAIN music of "Yes, Sir, That's My Baby Now."*

ACT III

SCENE.—*The same as Act I. Evening of the same day.*

The electric lights are on full.

When the CURTAIN rises, SALLY is discovered at the table L.C., speaking on the telephone. She is now in evening uniform.

SALLY. Thank heaven you've come to the phone. Listen, Willie, you *must* win, dear. Tell the other man and perhaps he'll let you. Things are in an awful state here. Jack and Doctor Knott and poor old Noah are all under arrest, and your Mother is going mad, I think. . . . What, dear? . . . Oh, the baby? Oh, he's all right, I smuggled him up to my room and he's sleeping through it all. No, he hasn't cried once, but we must get him away, dear. If they find him here we're finished, so *please* win, Willie, for our baby's sake—

(ARABELLA enters R., followed by STELLA. SALLY has hung up the receiver quickly, and goes off C. to stairs.)

ARABELLA. Lies, treachery and deceitfulness, that's what it is. Lies, nothing but lies. (*She goes down L. and sits at the table.*)

STELLA (*at R.C., catching sight of SALLY creeping up the stairs*). Sally!

SALLY (*checking and turning*). Yes, ma'am?

STELLA. Why are you creeping upstairs on your toes?

SALLY. If you please, ma'am, I've got chilblains on my heels.

STELLA. Come here.

SALLY (*coming downstairs*). Yes, ma'am. (*She enters the room to down C.*)

STELLA. You've been behaving very strangely all day.

ARABELLA. So has everyone else been behaving strangely. The poor girl's caught the family complaint.

STELLA (*coldly*). I don't see how you can possibly describe Father's weakness as a family complaint.

ARABELLA (*angrily*). That will do. An unfaithful husband is bad enough without an impertinent daughter thrown in. This is what comes of being so simple and trusting. Oh, the wretch! (*She sobs.*) You wait until I lay my hands on that actress.

STELLA (*half impatiently*). Oh, for heaven's sake, don't start giving way *again*. It's all your fault Jack and I have quarrelled. You've caused enough misery to others, now you're getting some of your own medicine.

SALLY (*moving to ARABELLA*). Please, ma'am, can I get you something?

ARABELLA. Yes, get that husband of mine—I'll deal with *him*—the deceitful hypocrite. (*She sobs and rocks to and fro.*)

SALLY (*to STELLA*). Please, ma'am, don't you think she ought to see a doctor?

STELLA. Doctor? What for?

SALLY (*glancing anxiously upstairs*). He might give her a sleeping draught.

STELLA. What use is a sleeping draught?

SALLY. Well, ma'am, she's making so much noise, she might wake . . . (*She stops suddenly, realizing she has made a blunder.*)

STELLA (*crossing to R. of SALLY*). Who might she wake?

SALLY (*hesitating*). The neighbours, ma'am.

STELLA (*looking narrowly at SALLY*). You're puzzling me, Sally. It seems to me you're concealing something.

SALLY (*taken aback*). Who, ma'am? Me—ma'am? Oh no, ma'am! (*She backs away.*)

ARABELLA (*bursting forth afresh*). This will all come out in the papers, and *what* a fool I shall look! I shall never be able to go home and face my neighbours. To think that I, a woman of my experience to be deceived by a man! (*She rises and crosses to the settee R.*)

(SALLY looks distractedly in the direction of the stairs as though afraid the baby will commence to cry.)

STELLA (*crossing down L.*). I'm very sorry, Mother, but you've only yourself to blame. (*She moves up, L. of the table.*)

ARABELLA. Myself to blame? I like that. Even if my husband *does* bring a baby into the house, there's no reason why he should murder it in cold blood.

(SALLY screams, sways, then suddenly rushes upstairs, saying:)

SALLY. Oh! I cannot bear this! I cannot bear it!

STELLA (*irritably*). What is the matter with the girl?

ARABELLA. Oh, don't be hard on her. I expect she's gone to get my smelling bottle. She can see I'm upset. She's got more sympathy for me than you have.

STELLA. Well, you shouldn't give way so.

ARABELLA. You gave way, when you thought it was Jack's baby.

STELLA. That's different.

ARABELLA. Oh, I would like to know how.

STELLA (*moving above the table to L.C.*). Well, Jack and I married for love.

ARABELLA (*rising*). Oh? (*She moves to C.*) And why did I marry your father, please?

STELLA. Because you were too mean to buy a hot water bottle.

ARABELLA. Oh! (*Breathlessly.*) How can you say such a thing?

STELLA. And you call him a murderer on the first little excuse that turns up.

ARABELLA. Little excuse? Do you call that horrible baby a little excuse?

STELLA. How do you know Father is a murderer?

ARABELLA. We both know the baby was in the summer house, and your father blew up the summer house to get rid of the baby.

STELLA. You only suppose that. The police searched the ruins but could find no trace of the body.

ARABELLA. Oh! It might have been blown clean through the roof, and not come back to earth yet. *Anything* may have happened! Oh—(*commencing to sob*)—I, the wife of a child murderer! (*Crossing R. to settee.*) Why doesn't that girl bring my smelling bottle?

(SALLY enters up C., running. *She is wild-eyed and breathless with fright.*)

SALLY. Where is it? Oh, where is it?

STELLA. Good gracious, Sally, don't make such a fuss. I expect it's where you last left it.

SALLY. It isn't. It's gone.

ARABELLA. I'll tell you where it is.

SALLY. Where? Tell me where?

ARABELLA. It's tucked away in my suitcase.

SALLY (*screaming*). Oh, my poor darling!

(*She screams again, rushes upstairs sobbing, and exits.*)

ARABELLA. Oh! She's very fond of me. She called me her poor darling. That's more than *you* do!

STELLA. The girl's hysterical. (*She eases to R. of the chair L.C.*)

ARABELLA. Is it any wonder why, with your father behaving as he has? It's a miracle she isn't afraid to stay here. Murders going on all round her. (*She sobs.*) They'll hang him, that's what they'll do, and I'll never get a chance to tell him what I think of him.

STELLA (*grimly*). I'm not worrying what they'll do to *your* husband. What I'd like to know is, what am I to say to *mine*? (*She begins to cry.*) I've treated him disgracefully. (*She sobs, sitting in the chair.*)

ARABELLA. He's a poor sort of man if he can't stand that!

STELLA. I'm not asking you for your opinion.

ARABELLA (*faintly*). Oh! Oh! To think that I should hear such words from my own daughter!

STELLA. It's the truth. As soon as you arrived you started trying to pick holes in Jack. You were full of hints and insinuations, and all the time your own husband was fooling you under your very nose.

ARABELLA. Oh! Stop! I feel faint. I can't stand any more! (*She sways and sits on the settee R.*)

STELLA (*suddenly repentant*). Oh, Mother—I'm sorry. (*She rises and moves to C.*)

ARABELLA. The world is spinning round and round.

STELLA. Oh, why doesn't that fool of a girl bring the smelling bottle? (*She goes to the stairs and calls.*) Sally—where are you? (*She crosses back down L.*)

(*SALLY enters down the stairs. She is crying and carrying a suitcase, one side of which has been cut open.*)

SALLY. It wasn't there! It wasn't there!

STELLA. What have you done to the suitcase?

SALLY. It was locked, so I cut it open.

STELLA. You cut it open? Why didn't you ask for the key?

SALLY. I couldn't wait. Oh, what shall I do? Where shall I find it?

STELLA (*snatching the case from SALLY, and placing it down behind the table L.C.*). Go and look for it, you stupid girl. I suppose, if the truth is known Willie has got it.

SALLY (*taken aback*). Willie?

STELLA. He had it in his hands before he went to the fight. He said to me he would only have to give his opponent one sniff at it and he'd be knocked out for good.

SALLY (*wildly*). Willie said that? Are you sure?

STELLA. I heard him. Besides, what has it got to do with you?

SALLY (*distractedly*). I want it! I want it!

STELLA. Oh nonsense, girl! Run out and get another. Ring at Smith's side door, he'll soon give you one.

SALLY. Oh, I can't stand this. I *can't*! I CAN'T!

(*She rushes off C. to L., weeping wildly.*)

ARABELLA (*reviving slightly and moaning*). Oh, where is my smelling bottle?

STELLA (*crossing to her*). It's all right, Mother, dear. Sally has gone out to get a new one.

ARABELLA. I feel a little better now. (*She rises.*) Stella, dear, don't desert me. I'm very upset.

STELLA (*soothingly*). Yes, Mother, I know. You'd better go and lie down. (*She leads her up C.*) I'll let you know as soon as any news comes through of the prisoners.

ARABELLA. Those terrible police can't leave us all night in suspense, can they?

STELLA. No, I tell you what. I'll ring up the police station and try to find out something. (*She sighs.*) My poor Jack.

ARABELLA (*sighing*). My poor, foolish Noah.

STELLA. Don't worry, Mother. As soon as Sally returns with the smelling bottle, I'll send it in to you.

ARABELLA (*moving to the door up c. and turning*). Stella—

STELLA. Yes, Mother?

ARABELLA. I—I wouldn't have minded so much about the baby, if it hadn't been the *image* of it's father.

(*She exits c., to R. STELLA goes to the telephone and is about to ring up when IMA enters R.*)

IMA. Hello, Stella, I say you *do* look worried. Where is everybody?

STELLA. Where have you been all these hours? (*Moving to R. of the table.*) I haven't seen you since the explosion.

IMA. I was scared stiff. Where's Jack?

STELLA. In prison.

IMA. And Father?

STELLA. He's in prison, too.

IMA. Prison? What on earth for?

STELLA (*suddenly breaking down*). Murder.

IMA. Murder? Who have they been murdering?

STELLA. Jack hasn't murdered anyone. It's Father. He blew up his baby in the summer house.

IMA. His baby?

STELLA. Yes. (*She breaks to down L.*) Mother found out it was Father's. We all thought it was Jack's at first. When Father saw he was found out, he blew up the summer house with dynamite and the baby with it. (*She breaks to down L.*)

IMA. Good heavens! Then who—who on earth does that other baby belong to? (*She sits on the settee.*)

STELLA (*turning*). Other baby? (*Crossing to c.*) What other baby?

IMA. The one I found in Sally's room.

STELLA. The one you found in Sally's room? When did you find a baby in Sally's room?

IMA. About an hour ago. I was upstairs practising my recitation, when I heard a baby crying. I went to Sally's room, and there it was—lying on the bed and squealing like blazes.

STELLA. Look here, Ima, are you joking?

IMA. Of *course* I'm not joking. I suppose I should not have said anything about it, for Jack's sake. It was you talking about the other baby being blown up that made me mention it.

STELLA. For *Jack's* sake?

IMA. Well, I suppose he's its father. He's the only married man in this house.

STELLA (C.). What a fool I've been. What a mercy I found out in time! (*Walks about agitatedly.*) My husband shall find a pretty bunch of trouble waiting for him when he comes out of prison. *If* he ever *does* come out!

IMA (*rises, goes R.C.*). But it's all right now.

STELLA (L.C.). All right, is it? No wonder that wretch of a

servant has been behaving strangely all day. She's upset because her master has been arrested.

IMA. Well, I shouldn't let the baby worry *you*, Stella.

STELLA. Why not.

IMA. I've got rid of it.

STELLA. *What?*

IMA. I thought it would cause a lot of trouble if I left it there, so I took it down the back stairs——

STELLA. Yes——

IMA. —Well, just at the corner of the street, outside a public-house, I saw a taxi standing——

STELLA. Yes——

IMA. —so I just slipped the baby through the taxi window, left it on the seat, and ran.

STELLA (*laughs*). You left it in the taxi? (*She laughs.*) Now I understand why Sally was so upset. Oh, what a beautiful revenge. Beautiful. What a funny child you are, Ima. (*Crosses R.C.; laughs.*)

IMA (*crosses L. to table*). Well, it seemed the best thing to do, and it was spoiling my practice with its awful howling.

STELLA. Ima, you're priceless. If it hadn't been for you I might never have known the truth about Jack. (*She goes up towards the door C.*)

IMA. I say, where are you going?

STELLA (*steadily*). I'm going to have a long talk with Mother.

(*She exits C., to off R.*)

IMA (*crossing to the settee R., opening a small book and commencing to recite*). "Two things greater than all things are——"

(*WILLIE enters up C. from L. His eye is blackened and his face plastered.*)

WILLIE. What cheer, Ima! (*He moves down L.C.*)

IMA (*turning*). Willie! You've lost the fight!

WILLIE. Don't you believe it. (*He pulls out a wad of notes.*) I've won!

IMA. Won? (*Crossing up to him.*) But look at yourself! What's happened to the other man?

WILLIE. He's still asleep.

IMA. But how quick you've been.

WILLIE. It was all over in the first round. Most fights are. Now, where's Sally?

IMA. Sally? What do you want Sally for?

WILLIE. Never you mind. *You'll* know in good time. (*He laughs.*) Buzz along and find Sally, there's a good girl. (*He crosses R. to the settee.*)

IMA. But she isn't here, Willie.

WILLIE (*turning*). Well, I can see that, stupid. I expect she's up

in her room. She's got a little bit of business to attend to. Pop up and tell her I want her.

IMA. She isn't in her room, Willie. She's gone.

WILLIE (*aghast*). *Gone?* (*Moving c. to IMA.*) What do you mean by "gone"? How can she have gone?

IMA (*easing to L.C.*). Well, *I* think she's afraid of what Stella will say to her.

WILLIE. What about?

IMA. Jack.

WILLIE (*scowling*). Jack?

IMA. Yes. Stella knows all about it. Jack and Sally are lovers, and there's going to be a fearful row.

WILLIE. You're quite right—there is going to be a fearful row! (*He turns up R., goes to the table L. of the french window, opens the drawer, takes out a revolver and comes down R.C.*) Where is my brother-in-law, Mr Jack Gay?

(DOLLY enters c. from L. She carries a newspaper and is breathless with excitement.)

DOLLY. I had to come to learn the latest. (*She moves down c.*) Look! Here's the *Evening Mail*. (*She shows the newspaper.*) They've arrested poor, darling Doctor Knott!

WILLIE (*taking the paper, and reading*). "Three arrested on murder charge. An explosion which occurred this afternoon in a summer house in the garden of Mr John Gay, a well-known local resident, has resulted in three men being arrested for murder. The police are searching the ruins for the body of a baby which is supposed to have been killed by the explosion." A baby—ye gods—a baby!! (*WILLIE throws the paper on the settee and rushes off c. upstairs.*)

DOLLY (*moving to IMA*). Whatever does it all mean?

IMA (*crossing R. to the settee*). I don't know, but it looks very much as though it's been raining babies!

DOLLY. However could it rain babies? (*She moves to below the chair L.C.*)

IMA. Well, there's the one that got blown up in the summer house—that's one. Then the one I found in Sally's room—that makes two——

(ARABELLA enters c. from R. She is followed by STELLA.)

ARABELLA (*checking at c. and pointing dramatically at DOLLY*). There stands the mother of my husband's child!

(*A pause. DOLLY and IMA are stunned.*)

DOLLY. Do you mean me?

ARABELLA. Yes, I do.

DOLLY. I've never seen your husband before today.

ARABELLA. I don't believe it! You have ruined my home!

DOLLY. I've never seen your home, and, what's more, if it

anything like it's owner, I don't want to! (*She moves down L. and turns.*)

ARABELLA. Listen to the shameless hussy.

STELLA (*at R.C.; to DOLLY*). You've caused enough unhappiness here. (*She crosses to L.C.*) You'd better get out.

IMA. But, Mother, this is Miss Dolly White. She's *terribly* clever. You don't know half the things she can do.

ARABELLA. I know enough of what she can do.

IMA. Yes, but she's teaching me.

ARABELLA. *What!* Teaching *you!* Why, with my own eyes I saw her embracing my husband!

IMA. Pooh! That's nothing. That was only practice. You ought to see her when she's really trying.

ARABELLA. Leave the room!

IMA. Oh, Mother, don't be so stuffy.

ARABELLA. Leave the room this instant!

(*She rushes towards IMA, who runs R. behind the settee.*)

Don't stand there talking to me, you little minx.

IMA (*shrugging shoulders*). Oh, very well. (*She crosses below the settee to L.*) Don't forget tomorrow, Miss White. We're going to try it out on the gardener. (*She turns up and sits R. of the table L.C.*)

STELLA (*to IMA*). You ought to be ashamed of yourself. (*She moves to ARABELLA.*)

DOLLY. But surely, Mrs Nagg, you wouldn't deny your husband a little harmless entertainment?

ARABELLA (*moving down below the settee*). Men are all alike—a lot of mormons!

DOLLY. Well, that's nothing to *me*. (*To STELLA.*) Your husband knows all that matters. *He's* paying *my* little bill.

STELLA. You're making some mistake——

DOLLY. Oh no, I'm not! Mr Gay *is* your husband, I suppose?

STELLA. How dare you! (*To ARABELLA.*) Mother!

ARABELLA (*interrupting; to STELLA*). Oh, it's *you* that's making a mistake. I warned you from the first about this husband of yours. I said he was a philandering good-for-nothing, and you wouldn't listen. *Now* you've got proof. First the servant, now this woman!

DOLLY (*moving up C.*). Don't you refer to *me* as "this woman", if you please. I'm Miss White to you, and my visit here is merely in the course of my profession.

ARABELLA. That's *very* evident!

STELLA. In any case, Mr Gay is not here at the present moment, neither is anyone else who desires *your* company.

IMA (*rising and going to DOLLY*). Don't go, Miss White. *I* want you to stay.

STELLA (*angrily, to IMA*). You foolish child! You don't know what you're talking about.

IMA. Don't I? I know *one* thing—you and Mother are out to prevent me from succeeding in my chosen job, but it's not going to work. If you turn Miss White out, I shall go with her.

ARABELLA (R. *at settee*). That from my *youngest* daughter. She's raving!

IMA. Oh, no, I'm not. (*To ARABELLA.*) I know the sort of work I'm cut out for. (*To DOLLY.*) And I'm going to be a big success, aren't I?

DOLLY (*to STELLA*). Can't you see how wrong it is to curtail the child's natural talent?

ARABELLA. Do you call kissing and canoodling other people's husbands natural talent?

DOLLY. Whether it's natural or not, it's a talent I can't imagine either of *you* possessing!

STELLA. I *won't* be insulted like this! Leave the house!

ARABELLA (*shrilly*). She doesn't even deny that she was kissing my husband!

DOLLY (*hotly*). Why should I? I was *paid* to do it.

STELLA. Paid? Who by?

DOLLY. Mr Gay. He wanted Ima to be given every chance to learn.

STELLA. My husband *paid* you to kiss my father?

DOLLY. Yes. And my God—I earned it!

(ARABELLA and STELLA react.)

What's more, I've a three months' engagement to do it four times a week.

ARABELLA. Then you're doomed to disappointment—for my husband's in jail, and I hope they hang him—and the higher the better.

IMA. Then it's a good job we've fixed the gardener for tomorrow. (*Comes down L. to DOLLY.*)

STELLA. Don't talk about tomorrow. There is no tomorrow as far as *that* woman is concerned. (*Indicates DOLLY.*)

IMA (*stamps her foot*). It's no business of yours, and I will *not* have you interfering. Jack expects *great* things of me, and I'm not going to disappoint him.

STELLA. Jack? What Jack?

IMA. Your Jack—*our* Jack.

ARABELLA (*shrieks*). Oh! He's after Ima now!

STELLA (*goes to IMA and shakes her*). Don't you stand there and talk like that to me—you wretched, precocious little minx!

DOLLY (*comes between STELLA and IMA*). Don't bully the child. (*Passes IMA down L.*)

STELLA (*moves away*). How *dare* you interfere? (*To IMA.*) Go to your room. I'll talk to you later.

IMA. Talk to me now. I'm listening.

STELLA (*to DOLLY*). Now, will you go? Or must I call the police?

DOLLY (*c.*). *You* call the police? I *like* that!

ARABELLA (*to STELLA*). Your husband has evidently given this woman to understand she has a right here.

DOLLY. Well, *haven't* I a right here?

IMA. Of *course*, she has.

STELLA (*to DOLLY*). Perhaps you will be good enough to tell me how you first met my husband?

DOLLY. Certainly. I was introduced by Doctor Knott.

ARABELLA. I *knew* it. That man's a professional home-wrecker!

DOLLY. That's a lie!

STELLA (*to DOLLY*). It's *not* a lie. Anyone can see what *he* is. Jack is in his clutches, that's the truth, and *you*, you're his accomplice!

DOLLY. I always suspected that *she* (*indicating ARABELLA*) was off her head, and now I'm *sure* of it. You're both crazy, and I dare say it's drink that's caused it.

ARABELLA. *Drink?* Oh—scandalous! (*Sinks on settee R., moaning.*)

IMA. I think you're all making a fuss about nothing.

STELLA. Nothing? Hark at her. Is it nothing that my husband and father have both turned out to be mormons?

IMA. Well, I *am* fond of Jack, why should I fib about it?

STELLA. Oh, I could *scratch* you!

DOLLY. Mrs Gay, you're in a dangerous state of insanity—

STELLA. Oh, don't you think that *you're* his favourite.

(*WILLIE runs wildly downstairs, and enters c., brandishing a revolver.*)

WILLIE (*grimly, to STELLA*). Where's your husband?

STELLA. Why, Willie? What do you want with him?

WILLIE. He has stolen the only woman I have ever loved—and I'm going to kill him!!

(*He rushes off c. to L. The door slams off stage a moment later.*)

ARABELLA } (*together*). { *Another woman!*
STELLA }

DOLLY. Now, Mrs Gay, you really must calm yourself—

STELLA (*interrupting*). Calm myself! *Calm myself!!* (*She goes towards DOLLY in a menacing manner.*)

(*DOLLY retreats towards up c.*)

(*Almost pushing DOLLY out.*) Get out of my sight, you snake in the grass! If you stay here another second, I won't answer for the consequences!

DOLLY. Yes—but listen to me—

STELLA. I won't! *I won't! I WON'T!* Get out!! (*Hysterically.*) *Get out—and STAY OUT!*

DOLLY. Oh! very well, but if your husband wants me he has my address.

(*She exits slowly C. to L. IMA runs after her. STELLA suddenly commences to cry, goes down to the settee and kneels at ARABELLA's feet.*)

ARABELLA (*turning to IMA*). To your room this instant!

IMA. But, Mother—perhaps there is some misunderstanding—

ARABELLA (*points to the stairs*). Go!

IMA. I've never heard such a fuss, and I don't even begin to understand—

ARABELLA (*thunders*). Go!!

IMA. Oh! Very well, but I'm going to find Miss White, and I shan't go to bed, so there! (*Sticks out her tongue at ARABELLA and exits C. off L.*)

STELLA. Oh, Mother, to think that Jack could treat me like this, after all he has said about other husbands who are false to their wives. (*The telephone bell rings. She jumps up, goes L. to table.*) All right, I'll answer it. (*Takes up the phone.*)

ARABELLA. I expect it's another woman after your precious husband. The horrid brute!

(*STELLA lifts the receiver.*)

STELLA (*into the phone*). Hello! . . . Yes. . . . Who? . . . The police? . . . What? They're what? When? . . . (*Grimly.*) Thank you. (*She hangs up the receiver and goes L.C.*) That was the police. They've been released—all three of them!

ARABELLA (*rising and crossing C.*). Released?

STELLA. Yes, they're on their way home.

ARABELLA (*grimly*). Oh, they *are*, are they? And what about that poor, defenceless little baby that was murdered? Are the police going to ignore that crime?

STELLA. They didn't say. They merely said they are on their way home. Your husband, my husband, and that double-dyed scoundrel, Doctor Knott.

ARABELLA. How *dare* they come here?

STELLA. I can't face Jack tonight. I've been through too much today. I can't stand any more.

(*She goes up C. and exits to off R.*)

ARABELLA. I can! (*Crossing down R.*) I'm just getting into my stride!

(*She exits down R. SALLY enters C. from L., followed by SERGEANT*

TRACKEM. *He is wearing a lounge suit and bowler hat, and appears to be taking careful stock of everything.*)

SALLY (*dabbing at her eyes with a handkerchief*). Come in, officer. (*Moving down R.C.*) This is the lounge. (*She turns to him.*) I don't

know where they all are. I don't know *what's* been happening. All I know is, I want you to find my baby. Take no notice of anyone you may see here, I think they are all mad, but *please* find my baby. (*Moving up to him.*) You are a good detective, aren't you?

DETECTIVE (*at c.; tilting his bowler over his nose*). I'm the greatest detective in the world! Heard of the Big Five?

SALLY. Yes.

DETECTIVE. I'm four of 'em. (*He crosses down R.*) Leave it all to me.

SALLY. All right. I'll go upstairs to my room. If you want me, come and fetch me. (*She goes out to the foot of the stairs.*)

DETECTIVE. Say, where is upstairs?

SALLY (*pausing on the stairs and pointing upwards*). Up there!

DETECTIVE. Yes, I thought it was. Sure I'll be right along.

(*SALLY exits upstairs. Door slams off L. The DETECTIVE goes to the switch L. of the c. door, turns out the light, and exits L. DOC KNOTT enters c. from L. followed by GAY. They both walk on tiptoe.*)

DOC (c.). Ssh!

GAY (L.C.). Ssh!

DOC. Switch on the lights, can't you?

GAY. Wait till I find the switch. (*He moves L.*)

DOC. Try feeling for it, and you might find it.

GAY (*switching on the light*). That's funny! (*He looks around.*)

DOC. What's funny?

GAY. No one here. Where is everybody? The place in darkness! There ought to be a blaze of light and a brass band to welcome the two criminals home. (*He comes down c.*) Well, it's been a great day, and on top of it all, we've lost poor old Noah.

DOC. I wonder what became of him? (*He moves towards the settee.*)

GAY. I don't know. The last I saw of him, he was hopping into a taxi. By Jove, won't my wife be pleased to see me again!

DOC. I'll say she will. It's wonderful how a woman will cling to a man when he's in trouble.

GAY. That girl's got a heart of gold. You must see, Doc, that this is a very important moment in my married life. She knows she has done me an injustice, and that all the pianos in the world are not worth falling out about. I don't want her to feel *too* guilty about it. Understand? But I want to make the most of the present advantage I've got over her, and, at the same time, get rid of the old woman. *She's* at the bottom of it all. There never would have been a cloud in our sky if it hadn't been for the old woman.

(*The DETECTIVE enters L. He sees DOC and GAY.*)

Great Scott, Doc! Do you see what I see?

DETECTIVE. Good evening.

GAY. Good evening. (*He stares at the DETECTIVE in surprise.*)

DETECTIVE. Good evening. (*He goes to the door c.*)

GAY. You've said that once. Where are you going?

DETECTIVE. I'm just going up to the little married lady's room.
(*He moves into the hall.*)

GAY. Hey! Just a minute!

DETECTIVE (*commencing to ascend the stairs*). Oh, don't upset yourself. I'm all right. I've been doing this for years. I know my way about here, I do.

(*He exits upstairs. GAY, at R.C., stares in amazement at DOC at L.C.*)

GAY. Doc, did you hear that?

DOC. I did.

GAY. He said he was going to my wife's room——

DOC. I heard him.

GAY. Said he'd been doing it for years. Knows his way all around here. And I always thought my wife the soul of honour, and here she has men calling on her when my back is turned! They're all alike, Doc. You think we've had excitement around here today, eh? Well, you haven't seen *anything*, yet! I'm going upstairs to murder the two of them. I'm going to tear them limb from limb! You stand outside the window and catch the limbs as I throw them out!

(*He exits, dashing upstairs.*)

DOC (*crossing up to the door c.*). For heaven's sake, Mr Gay, don't do anything rash! Oh gosh, if I don't get something to eat pretty soon, they'll mistake me for the vacuum cleaner.

(*The DETECTIVE enters L.*)

(*Starting back in surprise.*) Say, where have you been?

DETECTIVE (*moving to L.C.*). I've been all over the house, and I've just hopped down the back staircase.

DOC (*moving down R.C.*). Well, if you'll take my tip, you'll hop down the front staircase before he comes back and catches you.

DETECTIVE. Before *who* comes back and catches me?

DOC. The fellow who's just gone upstairs.

DETECTIVE. Oh, and who is he?

DOC. You darn fool—he's her husband, and what's more, he's got a very good idea what you're here for.

DETECTIVE. Darn it—that's the last thing I wanted—she told me to keep quiet about my business in this house.

DOC. I'll say she did.

DETECTIVE (*mysteriously*). I suppose you know it's an absolute secret that they are married.

DOC. What? But, good gracious, man, they've been living in this house for years! Look here, sir, would you mind telling me how long you've been in love with Mrs Gay?

DETECTIVE (*amazed*). How long? I'm not in love with Mrs Gay.

DOC. You don't mean to say you're *not* in love with her?

DETECTIVE. Me? You must be mad.

DOC (*angrily*). What? You're not in love with her? And you're calling on her and deceiving her? Allow me to tell you, sir, that you are a dirty dog!

DETECTIVE. Now, see here, you'd better be careful what you're saying. It strikes me you don't know what you're butting up against. (*He shows his detective badge.*)

DOC (*breathing on the badge and polishing it with his sleeve*). Ye Gods! You're a detective!

DETECTIVE. Yes—one of the greatest! In the Garage Murder case I got the proprietor. In the Bishop Murder case I got the Bishop, and in the Canary Murder case——

DOC. You got the bird! (*He breaks down R.*)

DETECTIVE. And I think I'll get something here before the night is out.

DOC. Yes, I guess you will. (*He sits on the settee.*) You'll get a thick ear if Jack Gay catches you!

DETECTIVE (*moving to C.*). Are you a member of the family?

DOC. God forbid!

DETECTIVE (*looking round cautiously*). Now, I may want a little help tonight, and you're just the man for the job. (*Easing to L. of the settee.*) This baby—dead or alive—must be found.

DOC (*starting back with alarm*). Baby? See here, there's no baby. The whole cause of the trouble was the piano.

DETECTIVE. Don't you believe it! I *know* a baby has been made away with in this house today—and I don't leave these premises until the mystery is cleared up.

DOC (*rising*). Yes, but are you sure you got your information from a reliable source?

DETECTIVE. What do you mean?

DOC (*confidentially*). Well, between ourselves, I think there are one or two lunatics about this house.

DETECTIVE. Lunatics? That's what the maid tried to tell me.

DOC. Yes. Dangerous ones——

DETECTIVE. Now, who, in your opinion, is the most dangerous of these lunatics?

DOC. Without doubt, the old lady.

DETECTIVE. Old lady?

DOC. The old bird called Arabella—she's a scorcher!

DETECTIVE. Violent?

DOC. Violence would be second nature to that woman.

DETECTIVE. I see. In that case, perhaps I had better not let her see me for the moment.

DOC. It all depends on whether your life insurance is paid up.

DETECTIVE. As bad as that?

DOC. Worse!

DETECTIVE. You know, it strikes me I ought to phone for an asylum ambulance to take away the lot of 'em. What do you think?

DOC. I think it would be a very good idea, and while you're ringing up I think I'll slip off home. (*He commences to creep off R.*)

DETECTIVE (*grabbing Doc and throwing him on the settee*). Oh no, you don't! You stay right here with me. They're a bunch of maniacs, that's what they are. (*He crosses to the phone.*) Don't you try to make a getaway. (*He lifts the receiver.*)

DOC (*almost tearful*). I wish I'd never seen the place.

DETECTIVE (*into the phone*). Hello! Hello!

DOC (*jumping up*). Hello!

DETECTIVE. This is a police call. Put me through to the Hopwood Lunatic Asylum, please. . . . (*To Doc.*) You just watch me work, you'll learn something.

DOC (*sitting on the settee*). I've learned enough already.

DETECTIVE (*into the phone*). Hello! That the asylum? Send an ambulance at once to Peacehaven—

DOC. Peacehaven! That's a fine name for this place!

DETECTIVE (*into the phone*). —and send an armed guard with it. There are a lot of dangerous ones here. (*He looks nervously around.*) And make it snappy. (*He rings off.*) Now, until that ambulance arrives, you and I have got to humour this bunch. (*He crosses to R.C.*)

(*STELLA enters from R.C. DOC rises. She is very indignant and obviously regards the DETECTIVE and DOC as intruders.*)

STELLA. What are you two men doing here?

DOC. Here's one of 'em. (*He crosses down L.*)

DETECTIVE. Ah, good evening, lady.

DOC (*turning*). You see, 'Mrs Gay, this gentleman is a friend of mine.

STELLA (*moving down R.C.*). Who gave you permission to bring your appalling friends to my house?

DOC. Since I'm on such very good terms with your husband I thought—

STELLA. Don't you mention my husband to me. After what has happened in this house today, he is no husband of mine.

DETECTIVE. I suppose you mean, the baby?

STELLA. Of course! What else should I mean?

DETECTIVE (*to Doc*). Same as the rest. Babies on the roof. (*He taps his head. To STELLA.*) I wouldn't lose any sleep about it, lady.

STELLA. I'm not asking you for your views, my man—I don't know who you are.

DETECTIVE (*showing his badge*). I'm a detective, lady.

STELLA (*horrified*). A detective?

DETECTIVE. Sure! One of the greatest.

STELLA. What are you doing here? I understood from the police my husband had been acquitted.

DETECTIVE. Oh, *he's* acquitted all right.

DOC. There never was a baby at all, you know.

STELLA. No baby?

DOC (*crossing to c.*). Of course not. (*Crossing down R.*) What you thought was a baby was a piano.

STELLA. A piano?

DETECTIVE. Lots of people make the same mistake.

DOC. They both sound very much alike.

DETECTIVE. Especially in a summer house.

STELLA. But it isn't the summer house I'm worrying about.

(*Moving towards the DETECTIVE.*) It's the other baby!

DETECTIVE. Now we're off. (*To STELLA.*) Which other baby?

STELLA. Jack's baby. The one that was in Sally's room.

DETECTIVE. Oh, *that* one.

STELLA. Yes, *that* one. Do you mean to say my husband knew nothing about that?

DOC (*hesitates*). Well, yes and no.

STELLA. Give me a straight answer, please.

DETECTIVE. Well, the only thing your husband did to that baby was to murder it.

STELLA. Oh! (*She falls fainting into the DETECTIVE's arms.*)

(*GAY enters C. from the stairs. He stares in amazement.*)

GAY. Ah! my wife—in the arms of her lover!

DETECTIVE (*to DOC*). Does he mean you?

DOC (*going to GAY*). Now, look here, Mr Gay, don't excite yourself—

GAY (*to the DETECTIVE*). Release my wife at once!

DETECTIVE. Is this lady your wife? (*He puts STELLA in the chair L.C.*)

GAY. You know darn well she is. You've been paying her attention for years. You said so just now. You're her lover.

(*DOC breaks to L. of the settee.*)

STELLA (*recovering*). Jack—how dare you! (*She rises and crosses to GAY.*)

GAY (*angrily*). You can drop that injured innocence stuff. I know what's been going on behind my back—don't we, Doc?

DOC (*very dignified*). We do.

GAY. And we're not having any, is us?

DOC. Us ain't!

STELLA. Jack, listen to me!

GAY. I won't! (*He sweeps STELLA to R.*) Aside, wench, while I destroy this wrecker of homes. (*He rushes at the DETECTIVE.*)

STELLA. Jack, you're making a mistake!

GAY (*checking and turning to STELLA*). I made a mistake when I married you and your whole darned family. (*He crosses down L.*)

STELLA (*breaking to c.*). Yes, and I made a mistake when I believed you to be the best and truest husband in the world.

GAY (*turning*). I am! I admit it!

STELLA (*accusingly, to GAY*). Yes—but what about the baby?

GAY. What baby?

STELLA. Why? Are there so many? *I mean the one you murdered.*

GAY. Who says I murdered a baby?

STELLA (*pointing to the DETECTIVE*). He did.

GAY (*to the DETECTIVE*). What? You, you long drink of water—did you say I murdered a baby? (*He rushes towards the DETECTIVE.*)

DETECTIVE (*dashing down R.*). No—certainly not! (*He ducks behind the settee.*)

STELLA. He did—here—a moment ago.

GAY (*at R.C., clenching his fist and menacing the DETECTIVE*). What right have you got to make statements of that description?

(*Doc intercepts him. He checks.*)

STELLA. That's a lie!

GAY (*turning to her*). What?

STELLA. Ima found one of your babies upstairs in Sally's room. (*She breaks to down L.C.*)

GAY (*easing to G.*). One of them? What's the matter with me? Have I been working overtime? Or am I going crazy?

DOC (*below the settee*). You're as sane as a March hare.

STELLA. Then there was the baby in the summer house.

GAY. It isn't me that's crazy—it's my wife!

DOC (*to GAY*). Let's talk about pianos.

GAY (*turning to Doc*). Don't mention pianos to me, *please!*

STELLA. What have pianos got to do with it?

GAY. *Everything*. Your mother is at the bottom of it all. She hates pianos and as soon as she saw the one in the summer house she had us arrested for murder.

STELLA. Heavens! They said there was the wreckage of a piano in the summer house after the explosion!

DOC. But no sign of a baby?

STELLA. That's quite right—no sign of a baby. But I saw a baby there—or didn't I? I must be going mad!

GAY. Going? Don't kid yourself, you've arrived. You're as bad as your mother. She told the police there was a baby there and had us arrested for murder.

DOC. *And we've been acquitted.*

STELLA. But, how do you explain all the rest of the evidence against you?

GAY. What evidence against me?

STELLA. The other baby—your affair with that terrible actress, and your flirtation with my little sister?

GAY. My flirtation with Ima? My affair with the actress? The other baby? What next shall I hear? I know nothing of all this.

STELLA. Oh, Jack, if I could only believe you. But it's impossible.

GAY (C.). Look here, let's get all this straight. (*To the DETECTIVE.*) Don't go away—I've got to murder you! (*To STELLA.*) Who said this other baby was mine?

STELLA. Ima.

GAY. Ima! Would you believe it! The little pig-tailed brat! So that's her gratitude to me for paying a woman to teach her elocution.

STELLA. Elocution? '

GAY. Certainly. That's what Miss White is doing here. She's an old boozing friend of the Doc's. (*To Doc, who attempts to remonstrate.*) Si-lence!! (*To STELLA.*) He got her in here to teach Ima elocution, and I'm paying for it.

STELLA (*to Doc*). Is this the truth?

DOC. Of course it's the truth.

STELLA. Oh, Jack, can you ever forgive me?

GAY (*sternly*). No! (*Mock bus.*) *Never!* Leave my house, and take your mother with you! (*He turns his back on STELLA and goes R. to Doc.*)

DOC. Forgive her.

GAY. Shall I? Oh, very well. (*He turns and meets STELLA, C.*) I'll forgive you on one condition. Never listen to your mother again.

STELLA. I've been so mean and suspicious, Jack dear.

GAY. You have! (*He suddenly frowns at the DETECTIVE.*) Hey! Just a moment! Who is this guy, anyway? I don't like people in bowler hats, they put their wireless on at two in the morning!

STELLA. He's a detective.

GAY. He couldn't detect an Irishman in a synagogue! (*To DETECTIVE.*) What are you doing here?

DETECTIVE (*smiles reassuringly*). I'm just waiting for a nice, big motor car to call for me.

GAY. A hearse will call for you!

STELLA (*to GAY*). It was all Mother's fault, she kept on about you.

GAY. Now, re your mother, I'm going to get rid of her.

DETECTIVE (*aside to Doc*). Planning to murder the old woman now!

STELLA. We'll get rid of her in the morning, darling.

GAY. You bet we will. We'll get rid of her tonight. I'm going to sweep her from the premises.

(*They embrace. ARABELLA enters R. She is dumbfounded at seeing STELLA in GAY's arms. DOC and the DETECTIVE duck behind the settee and peep over it during the ensuing scene. GAY and STELLA separate. GAY takes the banana skin from his pocket and throws it in front of ARABELLA as she moves up R.C.*)

ARABELLA. Stella! I'm ashamed of you!

GAY. Ah, enter little sunshine!

ARABELLA (*to STELLA*). How dare you forgive that man, after all he's done?

STELLA (*turning fiercely on ARABELLA*). You've interfered in my affairs for the last time! Tomorrow you leave this house for good! (*She breaks a little down L.C.*)

GAY. Tomorrow you leave this house for everybody's good—and the sooner the gooder! (*He moves down to STELLA and takes her arm.*)

ARABELLA. Don't you dare address me, you low wretch. (*Moving to c.*) Oh, if you only knew what I wish you!

GAY. And if you only knew what I wish you, you *would* be surprised. You pic-faced old flannel-foot!

ARABELLA. Bah! (*She turns and goes up c.*)

(*The DETECTIVE, from behind the settee, indicates that ARABELLA is mad. GAY signals him back. Then he signals the message to STELLA with exaggerated manner, rolling his eyes, lolling his tongue, etc.*)

ARABELLA (*seeing him*). What's the matter with the man? (*Moving down c.*) Is he mad?

(*The DETECTIVE works round backstage to L. of c. STELLA eases down by the table L.C. DOC is just above the settee R.C.*)

GAY. Mad! You bet I'm mad! And I'm getting madder every minute. I'll show you how mad I am.

(*He dashes to the settee, picks up the paper and tears it, and chews it up. He leans over the end of the settee and snarls at ARABELLA. She screams in horror.*)

ARABELLA. Help! Help! (*She flies to the DETECTIVE, up L.C.*)

GAY (*playing his leg like a banjo*). I'm a banjo player! (*He glares at ARABELLA, picks up a cushion from the end of the settee and throws it at her, misses her and hits the DETECTIVE with it.*)

(*ARABELLA rushes off in terror up c. followed by STELLA. They go R. GAY does more mad business.*)

DETECTIVE (*to GAY*). It's a sad case, Mr Gay—a very sad case!

GAY (*rising*). It certainly is. I understand now why you are here. *She* was the married lady you were after.

DETECTIVE. Sure, she was.

GAY (*laughing*). And to think I suspected my poor Stella. I might have known she had better taste. Still, all's well that ends well.

(*WILLIE enters c. from L. He is wild-looking and dishevelled. He points the revolver at GAY.*)

WILLIE. Hands up, Jack Gay!

(*The DETECTIVE and DOC dive for cover, GAY puts his hands up.*)

GAY. Hey! Put that gun away!

WILLIE (*L. of GAY*). You and I have an account to settle.

GAY. You bet we have! You've been living on me for years.

WILLIE. Never mind that now. I want Sally.

DETECTIVE (*rising from behind the chair*). Don't you want the baby too? (*He taps his head at GAY.*)

(*GAY taps his head at the DETECTIVE.*)

WILLIE (*to G.* By heavens, yes—where's my baby?

(*GAY takes the flowers out of the vase on the table behind the settee, dashes over to WILLIE and places vase over the revolver.*)

GAY. Now, now, Willie, be calm. You want a baby?

WILLIE. Yes.

GAY (*turning to Doc*). Got a baby on you, Doc?

(*DOC searches and empties his pockets and shakes his head in negative.*)

GAY. It's upstairs——

WILLIE. In Sally's room?

GAY. Sure.

WILLIE. I'll find it——

GAY. Give it these. (*He hands WILLIE the flowers.*)

WILLIE. I will!

GAY. Hooray!

(*WILLIE dashes upstairs with the revolver and the vase in one hand, and the bunch of flowers in the other. GAY stands C. in the doorway glaring like a wild man.*)

GAY. Ha! They're all crazy around here, except me. And I'm a butterfly!

(*He exits C. to R., waving his arms in imitation of a butterfly.*)

DETECTIVE (*breaking down L.*). Why doesn't that ambulance come?

(*SALLY enters C. down the stairs. She sees DOC, who moves down R.*)

SALLY (*moving down to L. of Doc*). Oh, Doctor Knott, you're here at last!

DETECTIVE. Now, we're off again! (*He watches the ensuing scene with curiosity.*)

Doc. She's going to make love to me again. Doggone it! I can't live on love—I'm hungry. (*To SALLY.*) Yes, yes, I know.

SALLY. But you don't know everything.

Doc. I guess you're right.

SALLY. I mean about our marriage.

Doc. Our marriage?

SALLY. Yes—I didn't tell you we had a baby.

Doc. Well, what do you know about that? Married and got a

baby, and never knew it. (*Crossing to c. To the DETECTIVE.*) The poor girl's dippy!

(*The DETECTIVE taps his head.*)

SALLY. But the poor little fellow has been lost. (*She weeps.*)

DOC (*turning to her and weeping*). Has he, really?

SALLY. Oh, Doctor, you've been so kind, and I want to ask another favour of you. I want you to tell Mr Gay we are married just as soon as Willie comes home.

DOC (*moving to SALLY, R.C.*). Oh, I couldn't do that. I am liable to be arrested.

SALLY. What for? You know it's the truth.

DOC. I'm darned if I do. But if you will get me something to eat, I'll do anything you say. I am starved to death.

SALLY. Oh, thank you, Doctor, thank you. As soon as I can I'll get you something in the dining-room. Oh, Doctor, you are so good! (*She embraces DOC.*)

(*WILLIE enters c. down the stairs.*)

WILLIE. Sally! (*He comes down L.C.*)

(*DOC chokes in alarm. SALLY breaks away from him.*)

So that's the way the wind blows, is it?

SALLY. Willie, what do you mean?

WILLIE. And I, like a fool, suspected Jack Gay.

SALLY. Whatever are you talking about?

(*The DETECTIVE taps his head to SALLY.*)

No, no, you're not, are you, darling?

WILLIE. Not what?

SALLY. Out of your mind.

WILLIE. Who the devil says I am?

SALLY (*indicating the DETECTIVE*). He did.

(*WILLIE rushes at the DETECTIVE, who picks up a chair to protect himself.*)

WILLIE (L.C.). What? (*To the DETECTIVE.*) Did you tell her I'm crackers? (*He turns to Doc.*) Now then! You're at the bottom of all this. Where's my baby?

DOC. Well, it's a funny thing about that baby. You see . . . (*He catches sight of WILLIE's grim expression and stops.*)

(*DOLLY and IMA enter c. from L. They are out of breath. DOLLY is carrying a baby.*)

DOLLY (*moving down c.*). We've got the baby!

WILLIE. Hurrah! They've got it!

(*SALLY takes the baby from DOLLY.*)

IMA (*L. of DOLLY*). I found Miss White outside. The taxi had gone, so we went to the police station—they wouldn't take it in there, but sent it to the Orphans' Home.

SALLY. Orphans' Home! What terrible treatment—my poor darling baby.

DOLLY. We went to the Orphans' Home and it had just arrived. We picked it up and rushed back here. (*She moves R., below the settee.*)

WILLIE. But how did it get lost?

SALLY. Never mind that now—we've got it back. (*She looks at the baby and screams.*) This isn't ours!

(*She shows the black baby and passes it to WILLIE, who passes it to the DETECTIVE. Everybody is in a state of confusion.*)

DETECTIVE (*to Doc*). If only that ambulance would come!

(*GAY enters up C. from R., flying like a butterfly. He is followed by STELLA and ARABELLA.*)

ARABELLA. What's the matter here?

(*ARABELLA is R. of C. STELLA is L. of her, and GAY L. of STELLA, SALLY is sobbing in WILLIE's arms R.C. The DETECTIVE is holding the baby, down L. IMA is at the table, L.C., and DOC stands R. of DOLLY, below the settee.*)

I refuse to be kept in the dark any longer. Tell me, what is going on here? (*To DOLLY.*) I know what you're here for!

(*GAY looks at the black baby in the DETECTIVE's arms, then gazes meaningly at DOC.*)

GAY. Ah-ha!

STELLA. Whose baby is that?

GAY (*promptly*). Doc Knott's.

ALL. What?

GAY. Quiet, everybody—I'll explain everything (*He moves down a pace.*)

DETECTIVE. I say, Doc, have you ever lived in Africa?

DOC. Certainly not!

GAY. Come here, Sally.

SALLY. Now, what is going to happen? (*She crosses to between STELLA and GAY.*)

GAY (*aside to SALLY*). Say, "yes" to everything. Now, ladies and gentlemen—(*looking at ARABELLA*)—you, too! Our Sally here, is a mother.

ARABELLA. Of a baby?

GAY. No—of a horse and waggon! What's it got to do with you, anyway? Do you know I'm beginning to dislike you! Well, the baby you saw was Sally's.

STELLA. A moment ago it was Doc Knott's.

GAY. He sold it to her—no, I don't mean that!

STELLA. Well, who actually is Sally's husband?

ARABELLA. That's what I want to know!

GAY. You would! Well, Sally's husband is a worthless good-for-nothing dog. He couldn't support her. Absolutely no good at all. He only worked one day a year.

ARABELLA. One day?

GAY. Yes, he was a hot-cross-bun designer! So he left her and fled to Africa, where he was devoured by a wild lion! That's my story, and I'm sticking to it!

SALLY. Oh!

WILLIE. What's that?

GAY (*to WILLIE*). You keep quiet. I have had enough of you.

WILLIE. I shan't keep quiet.

GAY. You will.

DOC (*takes c.*). Now, if you'll allow me, I can put all this straight in one minute.

GAY. *You* can, well *I* can't!

DOC. Sally's husband is *not* a worthless dog.

WILLIE. Good boy!

DOC. On the contrary, he is the soul of honour.

WILLIE. He's right.

ARABELLA. Then you know him?

DOC. Of course, I know him (*crossing to R. of SALLY*) for *I* am Sally's husband! (*He embraces her.*)

ARABELLA } (*together*). *You!*

STELLA }

SALLY (*pushing Doc violently away*). How *dare* you tell such a lie!

WILLIE (*grabbing Doc and shaking him*). What do you mean by it, eh? (*He throws Doc over to down R.*) Stop! This thing has gone far enough. There is no longer need for secrecy. *I* am Sally's husband!

ALL. *What?*

WILLIE. We've been married for more than a year.

ARABELLA. You?

GAY. Gee! I told the truth and didn't know it.

ARABELLA. And the baby?

WILLIE. He's ours, too.

ARABELLA. I knew there was something charming about that child!

GAY. You would! (*He looks at ARABELLA in disgust.*)

WILLIE. And now I want to know where our baby is, and who is responsible for its disappearance.

IMA (*moving to c.; to WILLIE*). Oh, Willie, please don't be angry, but thinking it would avoid a lot of trouble I took the baby downstairs and left it in a taxi!

WILLIE. Good heavens! A taxi!

GAY. Why didn't you leave it in a bus—it's cheaper!

IMA. It was taken to the police station, and then to the Orphans' Home, and—and now, we've got the wrong one.

(She bursts into tears, and exits C. to R. A motor horn is heard off stage.)

GAY. Ah! the cuckoo! Will you excuse us, ladies and gentlemen? Come on, Bill, we'll go on a baby hunt.

(He crosses up to the door C. followed by WILLIE, looks off and checks aghast.)

GAY. Oh, look! The Aga Khan!!

ALL *(looking towards the door)*. Who?

(NOAH enters C. from L. GAY bows him in elaborately. NOAH is very intoxicated and dishevelled. He staggers down C. singing "Put me among the Girls".)

ARABELLA *(sternly)*. It's Noah!

NOAH. Yes, Noah, come back to the nark!

ARABELLA. Where have you been?

(NOAH tries to take off his coat as he chases ARABELLA round the room to the other side of the table where she flees in terror.)

NOAH *(during the above)*. Mind your own business! Shut up! Arabella, I've had enough of your sarsaparilla! Another word from you and I'll make myself a widower! My name is no longer Noah, it's Samson. I tame lions, I do. From now on, I'm a lone wolf! *(He crows like a rooster and sits helplessly R. of the table.)*

GAY. Hey! Listen, you! Where have you been?

NOAH. I've been in a public mouse.

GAY. What?

NOAH. I drank so much whisky, I could bite a bulldog!

GAY. So that's where you got to in that taxi.

NOAH *(remembering)*. Oh, and while I was in that taxi, I was visited by the stork.

ALL. The stork?

NOAH. He dropped a baby in my lap, and flew——

SALLY. A baby? That was ours.

NOAH. I'm sure it wasn't mine.

(WILLIE and SALLY rush to him.)

WILLIE. Quick, what did you do with the baby?

NOAH. Oh, yes, the baby. Now let me see, what did I do with that baby? Did I . . . ?

WILLIE. Come on, make haste!

NOAH. Let me think. Did I leave it in the taxi? No——

ALL. No?

NOAH. Did I leave it in the Hublic Pouse? Yes—no—I didn't. Now what did I do with that baby?

(A TAXI-DRIVER enters C. from L., carrying a baby.)

TAXI-DRIVER. I say, Guv'nor, you left this in my taxi.

(SALLY snatches the baby from the TAXI-DRIVER and breaks to R.C.
The TAXI-DRIVER exits C.)

ARABELLA. And now, you little reptile—

NOAH. Go 'way, woman—you're drunk!

(An ambulance bell is heard off stage.)

DETECTIVE (crossing up to the door C., still holding the black baby).
Well, I guess this looks like the end of my case. Now, in the
Garage Murder case I got the proprietor, in the Bishop Murder
case I got the bishop—

(The DRIVER of the ambulance enters C. from L.)

DRIVER. Say, where's this lunatic?

GAY (pointing to the DETECTIVE). There he is!

(The DRIVER grabs the DETECTIVE and hustles him off.)

Well, I think that ends the mystery of the summer house. (To
STELLA.) Now, am I forgiven for the crime I haven't committed?

STELLA. Of course, Jack.

GAY. My darling!

WILLIE (to SALLY). My sweetheart!

ARABELLA (to NOAH). My cave man!

(IMA enters R. carrying a tray of food, which she carries to DOG.)

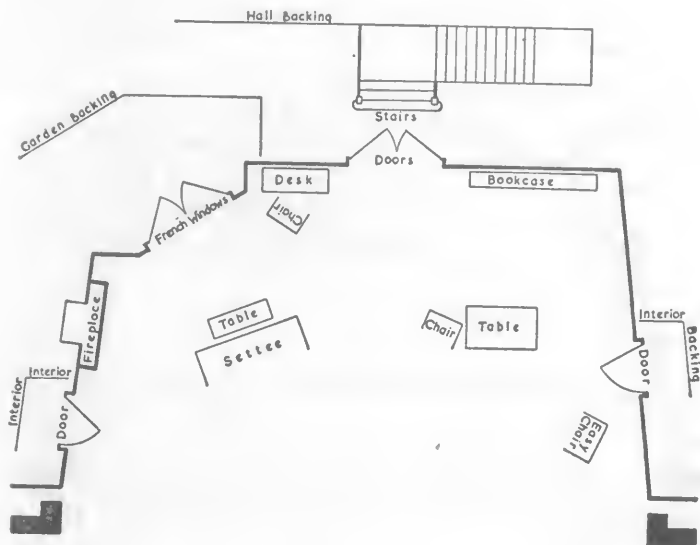
DOG. My dinner!

GAY. My Wife's Family!

CURTAIN.

FURNITURE AND PROPERTY PLOT

ACT I



Carpet on stage. Strip in hall. Carpet on stairs. Rug at hearth. Curtains at french windows.

On walls: a few pictures. An aneroid barometer L. of the door c. 1 settee with loose cushions.

Small table above the settee, with a vase of flowers.

Small table L.C. *On it:* telephone, whisky decanter, siphon, 2 glasses, cigarette-box, matches, ashtray.

1 small chair R. of the table.

1 small easy chair down L.

1 writing desk, up R. *In drawer of same:* a revolver.

1 chair at desk.

1 bookcase, up L.

Personal:

WILLIE: Cigarette-case, filled. Lighter.

NOAH: Suitcase, several parcels, and a travelling rug.

MY WIFE'S FAMILY

IMA: Handbag with a letter in it. Small copy of *Hamlet*.

SALLY: ARABELLA's suitcase.

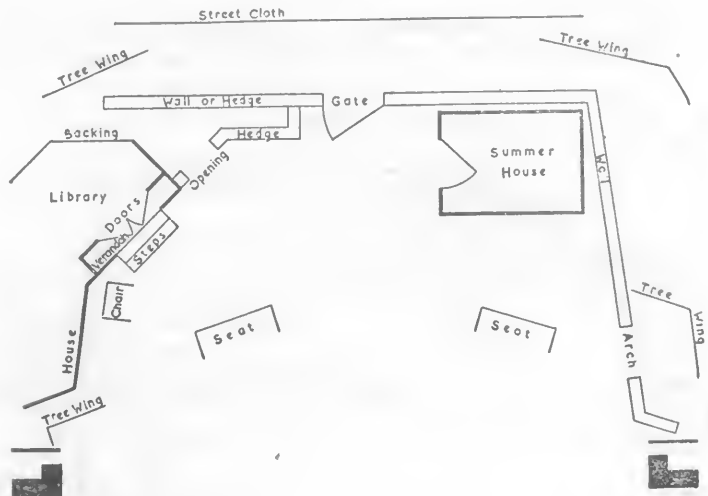
A note in an envelope (*on a tray*).

A visiting card (*on a tray*).

GAY: Some letters in envelopes.

DOC: A shotgun. (*Ready off R.*)

ACT II



Stage cloth.

2 garden seats.

1 garden chair.

Personal:

NOAH: Bandage on head.

Laurel wreath. (*Ready off L.*)

DOC: A banana, a stick of dynamite, lighter.

IMA: Copy of a play.

SALLY: Property baby.

ARABELLA: A rolling-pin. (*Ready off R.*)

ACT III

Furniture as for Act I.

Personal:

SALLY: A suitcase with side cut open. (*Ready off above stairs.*)

DOLLY: A newspaper, a property black baby.

IMA: A tray with food, for Doc. (*Ready off R.*)

LIGHTING PLOT

ACT I

Floats and Battens: No. 18 Blue, No. 7 Pink, No. 51 Gold, all FULL.
Exterior flood: No. 17 Steel and frost, FULL. No. 3 Straw flood
through french windows.
Interior flood, in hall: No. 51 Gold.
Interior backings: Straw lengths.
NO CUES.

ACT II

Floats and Battens: No. 18 Blue, No. 7 Pink, No. 51 Gold, at FULL.
F.O.H. flood: No. 8 Salmon and No. 51 Gold, mingled.
Flood on cloth and wings: No. 3 Straw.
Interior (house): Amber lengths.
ON CUE: Flash and explosion effect.

ACT III

Floats: No. 18 Blue, No. 7 Pink, No. 51 Gold, at $\frac{1}{2}$.
Battens: Ditto at $\frac{3}{4}$.
Acting areas (R.C., C., and L.C.): No. 51 Gold spots.
Exterior flood: No. 32 Blue and No. 3 Straw mingled.
Interior flood, in hall: No. 51 Gold and No. 8 Salmon.
Interior backings: Straw lengths.
NO CUES.